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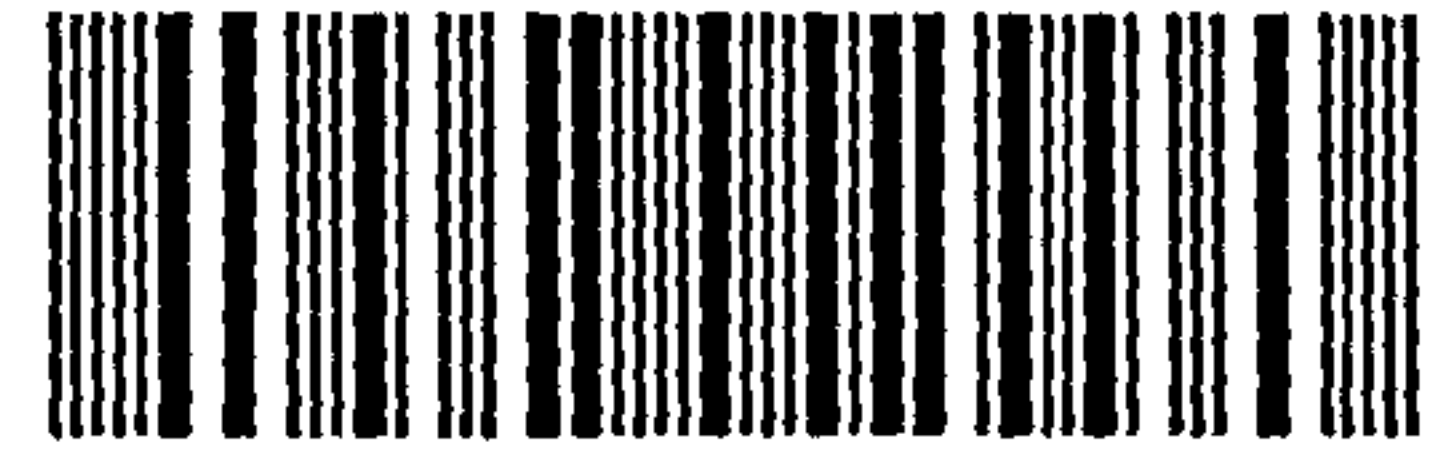
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**The Role of Intensive Family Support in the Governance of  
Anti-Social Behaviour**

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Social Policy and Criminology, the Open University**

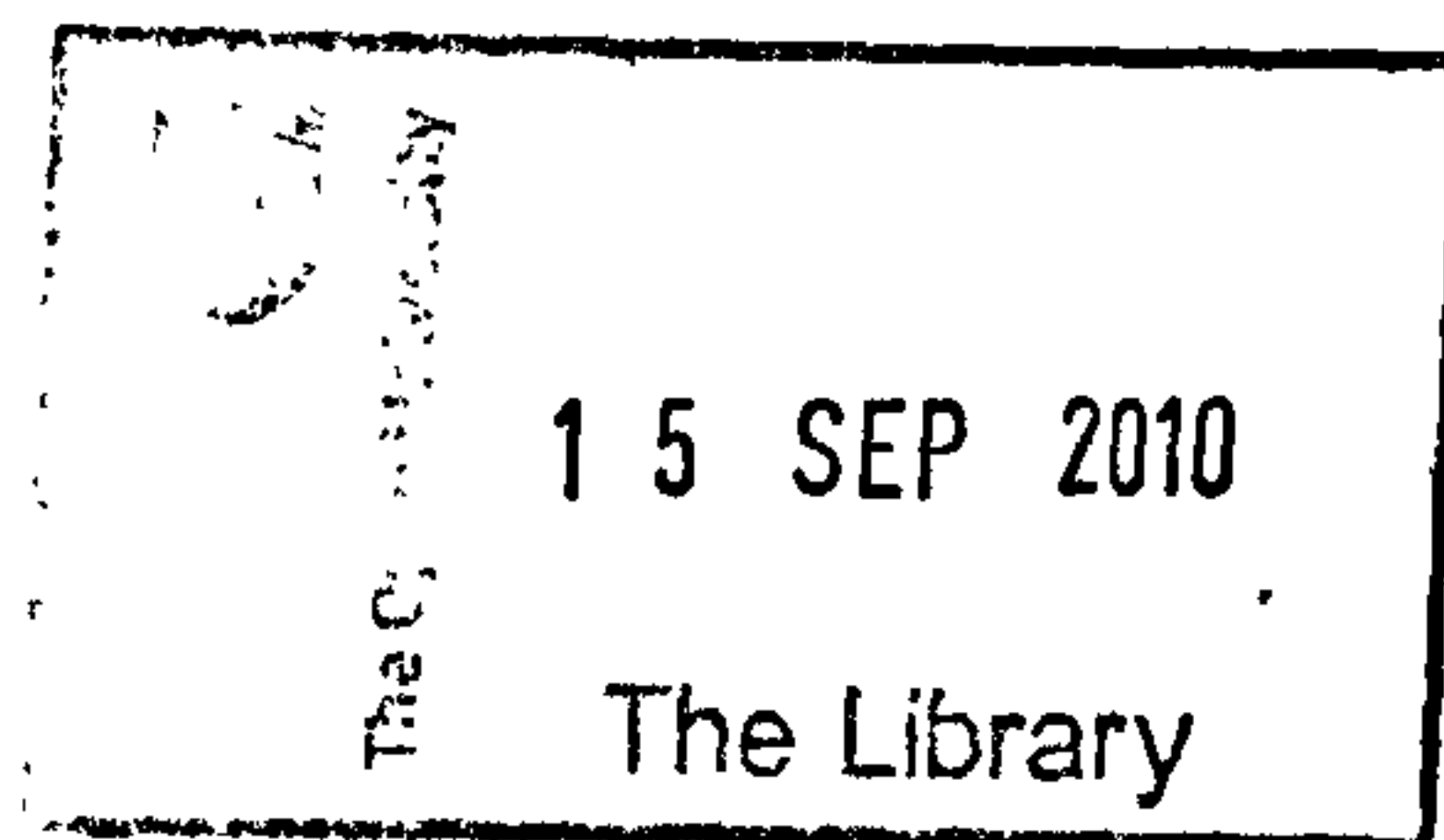
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## Abstract

In seeking to make sense of the role of intensive family support in the governance of anti-social behaviour, this thesis has focused analytical attention on one case study project, the Family Support Service. Based on data collected from 35 interviews with women receiving the service, project staff and local agents, the research findings suggest that intensive family support is a complex intervention with both positive consequences as well as negative costs for the families involved. The Family Support Service entailed intense surveillance and supervision of marginalised populations in domestic private spaces and did, therefore, have controlling and disciplinary qualities, particularly with regard to the families living in 'core' residential accommodation. Yet, in spite of this, the Family Support Service also contained a significant social welfare ethos based on finding long term sustainable solutions to individual's problems, not least security of housing and income. The approach project workers took with families was, largely, non-stigmatising and sensitive, and for the women interviewed, who were socially isolated and susceptible to depression, this 'befriending' role was important in improving their quality of life. The role that family support plays, however, in the governance of anti-social behaviour is inherently bound up with the way in which it is implemented at the local level and the particular circumstances of the families involved, which suggests that positing intensive family support as *inherently* 'bad' or 'good' is inaccurate. This challenges some of the more critical literature around New Labour's anti-social behaviour and family support policies and suggests that this type of intervention can not be understood simply as a project of exclusion, punishment or moral reformation. The thesis argues for further research about

what it is that gives rise to less punitive types of family intervention and, therefore, how progressive change for vulnerable families might be generated.



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## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>ABC</b>	<b>Acceptable Behaviour Contract</b>
<b>ADHD</b>	<b>Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</b>
<b>ALMO</b>	<b>Arms Length Management Organisation</b>
<b>ASB</b>	<b>Anti-Social Behaviour</b>
<b>ASBA</b>	<b>Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003</b>
<b>ASBO</b>	<b>Anti-Social Behaviour Order</b>
<b>CAMHS</b>	<b>Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service</b>
<b>CLG</b>	<b>Communities and Local Government</b>
<b>CSO</b>	<b>Community Safety Order</b>
<b>CDA</b>	<b>Crime and Disorder Act 1998</b>
<b>DFP</b>	<b>Dundee Families Projects</b>
<b>FIP</b>	<b>Family Intervention Project</b>
<b>FSS</b>	<b>Family Support Service</b>
<b>HAS</b>	<b>Homeless Assessment and Support</b>
<b>KWNS</b>	<b>Keynesian Welfare National State</b>
<b>LA</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>
<b>NSP</b>	<b>Notice of Seeking Possession</b>
<b>ODPM</b>	<b>Office of the Deputy Prime Minister</b>
<b>RAP</b>	<b>Respect Action Plan</b>
<b>SWPR</b>	<b>Schumpeterian Workfare Postnationalist Regime</b>
<b>YOT</b>	<b>Youth Offending Team</b>

## Chapter One

### Introduction

Despite limited empirical evidence on the nature and extent of the problem (Squires and Stephen, 2005; Prior, 2009), tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) has been firmly established as a central component of New Labour crime and disorder policies since the mid 1990s. While in opposition, the Labour Party presented ASB as a widespread problem that was making thousands of people's lives a misery (Labour Party, 1995) and the issue played a key role in the re-branding of Labour as a 'tough on crime' Party (Gilling, 2007). It went on to dominate New Labour's law and order agenda after the Party came to power in 1997 and led to the introduction of successive rounds of legislation and an ever-increasing raft of legal tools designed to deal with the 'problem'. As the policy has evolved over the 12 years that New Labour have been in office, the subject and object of ASB policy has shifted. There has been a move away from a concern with the better-regulation of unlawful acts perpetrated by a minority of 'criminal' offenders to the governance of a wide range of disorderly, and often non-criminal, behaviours. This has resulted in the targeting of a range of people and behaviours deemed to be 'dangerous' and 'irresponsible,' such as beggars, street drinkers, and loitering youths (Burney, 2005). Despite these shifts, however, the image of the 'problem family' - construed as morally deficient and 'the enemy within' (Gilling, 2007), a breeding ground for future criminality (Home Office, 1997b; Muncie, 2002; Jamieson, 2005), and a precursor to community decline (Straw and Michael, 1996; Home Office, 2003) - has remained a constant, playing a defining role in explaining the root causes of ASB and devising policy solutions:

...problem families can disrupt the quality of life of whole communities and make the lives of residents around them miserable. They also put themselves at risk of losing their home, their children at risk of being taken into care, if it's in their best interest, or having enforcement action such as anti-social behaviour orders taken against them (Respect Taskforce, 2007a).

The presumption is that ASB is driven, primarily, by forces that are internal to the family environment, the foremost of which is dysfunctional parenting.

The notion that parents are to blame for their children's 'offending' behaviour is, of course, not new and the promotion of state intervention into the private lives of families deemed to be problematic in some way sustains a modern trend that can be traced back to at least the post-war period when efforts to reform the 'problem family' led to (chiefly working class) families and parents (usually mothers) being targeted by interventions designed to inculcate moral responsibility. In spite of this, however, the UK has historically been considered either not to have a family policy, as such, or at the most, to have implicit family policies (Featherstone, 2006). This has changed, however, under the New Labour Government. Recent policy and practice developments suggest that almost any social ill, be it poverty, social exclusion, crime and ASB, poor educational attainment, poor mental and emotional health can be remedied by improving parenting skills. This zealous concern with the family and parenting as a designated area of policy intervention has given rise to a well established



'parenting support industry' (Moran *et al*, 2004) and has meant that, under New Labour, bringing up children is no longer largely a private matter:

"The family, once perceived as the bastion of private life into which the state has no right to intervene except to protect life and limb, now is the site of much government activity and intervention. Not only does the state see fit to try to regulate what people put on their dinner tables with endless (and often contradictory) advice and guidance, but it has taken a much more proactive role in parenting" (Crawford, 2006: 456).

It is what is broadly referred to as 'intensive family support' that has recently emerged as the key technology for promoting 'sustainable' solutions to the ASB policy problem. This approach to dealing with ASB was first consolidated in the Government's 2006 Respect Action Plan (RAP) which committed the Government to establishing a network of Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) modelled on the Dundee Families Project (DFP) (Dillane *et al*, 2001; Respect Taskforce, 2006a). Established in 1996, the DFP was the first 'supportive' service in the UK developed specifically to work with alleged perpetrators to address the 'root causes' of ASB. The stated primary objective of FIPs is to change the behaviour of "a small number of highly problematic families that account for a disproportionate amount of ASB" in order to "restore safety to their homes and the wider community" (Respect Task Force, 2006b). It is evident that commitment to intensive family support is set to continue apace with the introduction of a further range of policy initiatives based on "intensive support" including the recent introduction of Family Pathfinders for 'families at risk'

(Cabinet Office, 2008) and Intensive Intervention Projects aimed at "the most challenging, problematic young people" (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008). A further expansion of FIPs was also revealed in Gordon Brown's speech to the 2009 Labour Party conference in which he defined the intervention as: "a tough love, no nonsense approach" and claimed that "family intervention projects work".

The New Labour Government's indefatigable drive to promote intensive family support as a tried and tested method for addressing ASB has been driven by 'evidence' derived from (mostly Government funded) evaluations that have provided findings to demonstrate that family support interventions are beneficial and 'work':

"This evaluation has provided positive evidence of the way in which FIPs are operating. There is general consensus that the FIP model is 'fit for purpose' and is required to deal with the families they are targeting. Testament to their perceived success is the way the FIP model is being rolled out to other areas. It is also being used as a blueprint for services with families more broadly classified as 'at risk'" (White *et al*, 2008: 146)

In 2004, it was my participation in one of these evaluation studies (Nixon *et al*, 2006a., 2006b.,2008) that was the impetus for this thesis. At the time the evaluation was commissioned, action to address ASB perpetrated by 'problem families' relied to a significant extent on the eviction and exclusion of families. 'Support', as opposed to sanction or enforcement, for alleged perpetrators of

ASB appeared, at least on the surface, therefore, to represent a positive and innovative shift (Bannister *et al*, 2007). However, whilst family support did represent a 'new' method of dealing with ASB, a certain amount of doubt and scepticism about this type of intervention drove my motivation to undertake PhD research on the topic. In particular, its place within a larger and much criticised ASB policy agenda and the implications of the 'core' residential unit seemed troubling. The impetus to conduct this doctoral research was underpinned, therefore, by my desire to think more deeply about this type of intervention and, in particular, whether it did indeed offer a more progressive challenge to the prevailing Government policy and practice orthodoxy. This meant going beyond an evaluation of whether intensive family support projects 'work' and achieve their stated objectives, to ask a series of more penetrating questions than those that would be posed in the Government-sponsored evaluation.

The core questions guiding this endeavour were informed by a growing body of critical literature on New Labour's family support policies as well wider theories about how power and control are exercised, and with what purposes, in the governance of ASB. Indeed, while the Government's confidence in the merits of intensive family support seems unequivocal, the academic community remains less convinced. The Government's declarations about the 'proven' benefits of this type of intervention, like most other Government policy around ASB, have been subject to intense criticism from within the academic arena. Critical commentators have drawn attention to ideologies that inform the policy and posed questions regarding whether family support is really such an unqualified good thing, considering the 'why' of such interventions, the rationale behind New Labour policy developments in this area and, with that, the goals of



parenting and family support activities. Garrett (2006., 2007), for instance, warns that FIPs bear similarities to 20th century versions of experimental, eugenicist institutes and camps for social engineering operating in Nazi Germany and the Netherlands that sought to re-educate and rehabilitate asocial families. For Garrett, FIPs also: "hark back to the 'remoralisation' of the working classes, urban poor and 'industrial residuum' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (2006: 845) and, particularly those with residential units, are said to provide "a new disciplinary mechanism *beyond* due process and law" (Garrett, 2007: 221). For Gillies (2005a; 2005b), family and parenting support amounts to a top-down, authoritarian programme of 're-training' driven by a particular moral agenda aimed at regulating those families who are unable or unwilling to conform to the moral values of the mainstream. It has also been argued that an emphasis on parental responsibility masks the wider structural causes of ASB which are instead explained as signs of moral decay and anti-authority attitudes rather than, for example, alienation, the decline of physical surroundings, unemployment, or depression (Goldson and Jamieson, 2002). This substantive literature is anchored, more or less explicitly, in wider theories, including governmentality and political economy perspectives, concerned with how power and control operate in the governance of conduct, and which draw attention to the way in which (ASB) policy problems and solutions are instantiated, and to the role of the state and non-state actors.

These polarised positions seem to suggest that intensive family support is either an unqualified 'good' thing or is resolutely 'bad'. However, it is pertinent to acknowledge the largely abstract basis of many of the critiques of intensive family support and the paucity of academic research into the 'real' practical

effects of such interventions. A large amount of critical commentary has been based on a textual analysis of policy, the critique of which is founded on the implicit and explicit moral judgements made therein about the family and parenting (Gillies, 2005a; Smith 2006; Hughes, 2007). While such critical assessments have immense persuasive power, important work by Elizabeth Burney (2005), Gordon Hughes (2007), David Prior (2005., 2007) and Andrew Millie *et al* (2005), among others, is beginning to reveal the complexities of ASB policy enactment. There is evidence of adaptive responses and even resistance to ASB policy and rhetoric from practitioners on the 'front line' which may be reflective of different cultures in local authority (LA) areas and their geo-historical contexts (Sayer, 2000). This diverse body of work brings with it a call that researchers take due regard of the specific contexts, and the relationships, processes and practices therein, where problems of order and social reactions to them are constituted (Edwards and Hughes, 2005; Clarke, 2007a).

The thesis draws together these different arguments in the debate through case study research in one intensive family support project, the Family Support Service (FSS), which is aimed at reducing ASB among families who are homeless or at risk of eviction on account of their conduct. The service was a precursor to the Government's FIP programme, but was subsumed as part of the 53 FIPs set up under the Respect programme during 2006/7. The thesis looks through the lens of a number of theoretical perspectives in order to assess the utility of each in working through the empirical data and, in turn, explaining the processes, practices and consequences involved in governing ASB through intensive family 'support'. In so doing, it also builds on sociological analyses of the governance of ASB which suggest that theoretical

understanding needs to be adapted alongside empirical research that takes better account of the agency and choice of local actors, and the range of determinants of ASB policy enactment. This approach is underpinned by the conceptual and analytical resources associated with critical realism which provides a schema for mapping out the complexity of ASB policy enactment and directs attention to ontologically focussed questions about 'real' structures that exert (causal) influence on the social world (Sayer, 2000). Three key questions focused the research described in the thesis:

- How is intensive family support placed within the wider ASB policy field?
- Is intensive family support a positive and beneficial or negative and repressive form of intervention?
- How are power and control exercised in intensive family support projects and with what purpose?

The analysis, findings and conclusions presented in response to these questions are developed throughout the nine chapters that follow. It is pertinent to underline four key contributions to knowledge about the role of intensive family support in the governance of ASB that may be gleaned from this:

1. This thesis provides an original contribution to the debates about intensive family support in the governance of ASB as it moves beyond the shortcomings of a-theoretical evaluative literature on the one hand, as well



as abstract critical commentary on the other. It is distinctive by virtue of its grounding in theoretically informed empirical research.

2. The approach taken in this thesis has not involved the 'testing' of a single theoretical framework. It has found a theoretical point of departure in the substantive critical literature on family support as well as more general theories about how power, control and authority operate within the governance of conduct, including governmentality and political economy approaches. By contextualising these theories within the empirical, the thesis draws out the tensions, inconsistencies and insights each has to offer. In so doing, it provides a contribution to theoretical knowledge by 'speaking back' to these different bodies of work and by challenging, informing and refining some of their core assumptions.
3. The thesis challenges the critics of family support on the grounds that their claims are not only overly simplistic but somewhat erroneous. It argues that while we must confront the worrying and disconcerting aspects of intensive family support, the intervention might be conducive to helping disadvantaged and troubled families access better lives. The thesis therefore provides a valuable contribution to knowledge about the role of intensive family support and what it is that gives rise to less punitive types of intervention and, with that, how positive, progressive change for vulnerable families accused of ASB might be generated.
4. The thesis is original in its explicit acknowledgement of the way in which a commitment to 'realism' has given rise to a particular way of 'seeing' and



'hearing' during the data analysis processes. Although I do not claim to have uncovered 'the truth' about intensive family support, my thesis is a social scientific truth-claim but one that is fallible and open to public scrutiny, criticism and corroboration. This stands in contrast to much academic research that shies away from talk of 'causes' and the 'real' effects of policy, and allows the thesis to be more rigorous and precise about the conclusions that can legitimately be drawn from research.

### **Structure of the thesis**

**Chapter Two** sets out the national context within which the case study intensive family support project, is situated, providing an account of the political environment within which ASB, and family support as a means of addressing it, emerged as a policy priority. It also outlines the core components that constitute the Government's campaign to tackle ASB and explores the key theories, ideologies and assumptions that underpin this policy field, drawing particular attention to policies that oscillate around the family and parenting.

**Chapter Three** focuses in on family support. It casts its gaze back to identify where and when family support emerged as a 'governmental technology' to tackle ASB and what the evaluative evidence tells us about its efficacy. It also reviews substantive literature from a range of critical commentators that draws attention to the potentially negative and regressive aspects of family support.

**Chapter Four** situates the substantive theories about family support reviewed in Chapter Three within wider theories concerned with how power and control

are exercised and with what purposes, namely political economy and governmentality perspectives. In so doing, the chapter explores the way in which the ASB agenda is linked to wider governing processes, the way in which (ASB) policy problems and solutions are instantiated, and the role of the state and non-state actors. The chapter also sets out how these approaches will be used within a theoretical framework underpinned by the philosophical assumptions of critical realism. It is suggested that political economy and governmentality perspectives provide useful but also limiting conceptual and theoretical resources with which to understand the conditions of existence, together with both the intended and unintended effects of intensive family support projects.

**Chapter Five** sets out the background to the doctoral research in terms of the motivations behind the choice of study. It also describes the steps that were taken to address the research questions posed above including a detailed, reflective account of the data collection and analysis process on which the thesis research is based. A total of 35 semi-structured face-to-face interviews with 26 participants were conducted in one case study location over a three year period (2004-2007).

**Chapter Six** is the first of three chapters that report on the research findings and begin to answer the key questions at the heart of the thesis. It focuses analytical attention on the power relations, institutional arrangements and political interests that gave the FSS momentum and shaped the nature of the intervention. This geo-historical explanation entails a concern with the policy making process and the conditions of existence within which the FSS policy

materialised. Particular attention is paid to local political agency and, with that, the role of state and non-state governmental agents.

**Chapter Seven** shifts the focus on to another 'moment' of the FSS policy, namely, its 'street-level' operationalisation. This is a concern with how the project is played out in practice. The chapter draws on an analysis of data derived from interviews with the FSS project staff as well as local actors from a range of agencies who work in partnership with the FSS to deconstruct the discourses that render the FSS policy problem 'thinkable and governable' and which, in turn, legitimise certain actions and practices.

**Chapter Eight** focuses attention on the policy 'subjects' and is concerned with the impact of the FSS's rationalities and technologies of governance on families, or the 'lived experience' of implementation. Drawing on interviews with women receiving the service and agents involved with them, this chapter looks at how the project impacted on the lives of families in order to assess the extent to which a disciplinary rhetoric and technologies played out in practice, and what it is about the project that produces particular effects.

**Chapter Nine** concludes the thesis by summarising the main research findings reported in previous chapters and suggests what implications these have for academic and policy communities. It also points to the limitations of the thesis and suggests areas where further research is required.



## **Chapter Two**

### **The Political Context: New Labour, Anti-Social Behaviour and the Problem Family**

#### **Introduction**

This Chapter sets out the political, historical and theoretical context within which intensive family support as a means of addressing ASB is situated. It is within this wider political climate that the FSS, which is the focus of my research, was established.

The chapter begins by providing an account of the political environment within which ASB emerged as a policy priority. As Gilling (2007) has noted, although it is difficult to disentangle the evolution of the ASB policy programme from shifts in other fields including housing (Burney, 1999), youth justice (Squires and Stephen, 2005) and policing (Gilling, 2007), this section attempts to summarise the key developments and pressures that led to New Labour's colonisation and expansion of the policy domain. In so doing, it draws attention to the centrality of notions about the 'problem family' conceptualised in policy discourse as being a key contributor to the underlying causes of ASB which, in turn, has provided justification for positioning the private domestic sphere as the site of solutions. The chapter goes on to deconstruct the various theoretical assumptions that underpin and legitimate the significance that New Labour place on the quality of family life in explaining ASB. It then reflects on how New Labour's 'recent' state interventions into the lives of, usually working class

families, has strong historical antecedents and in many respects are not 'new' at all.

### **The rise of the ASB agenda: New Labour in opposition**

From the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, the Conservative Government had moved toward the centre ground and an 'age of reason' (Gilling, 2007). This was a brief 'liberalising moment' that came about as a result of the ascendance of a 'decarceration' of children, just deserts sentencing philosophy and a responsabilising discourse which were evidenced through the 1991 Criminal Justice Act.

Crime rates were high during this era and Gilling (2007) suggests that the Conservatives may have been mindful that the continuation of too much punitive law and order rhetoric looked disingenuous given that the Party had been in office for nearly a decade. Although the discourse was neoliberal in emphasis, when it manifested in community based approaches it proved to be empowering for LAs. However, under the leadership of Tony Blair, with his personal interest in law and order, together with a bid to enhance their office-seeking credentials, the Labour Party played an instrumental role in shifting the agenda towards populist punitive grounds projected as a 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' approach<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that this chapter has focussed on the more local, practical and political factors that stimulated policy change rather than the wider, structural factors (a neo-liberal project, socio-political and cultural transformations), that led to the demise of penal-welfarism and the emergence of a new terrain of crime control that could be evidenced in many advanced neo-liberal states (Gilling, 2007).

New Labour politicians claimed that the criminal justice system was failing and was unable to deal with the 'new' problems it faced. An 'excuse culture' (Home Office, 1997b) was alleged to have taken root in which people who perpetrate crime and disorder were not being made to take responsibility for their behaviour. In response, the needs and rights of victims were prioritised and policies proposed which sought to ensure that offenders were brought to justice and held accountable. This critique of criminal justice agencies coalesced with a desire to strengthen the capacity of the criminal justice system to deal with disorder and incivilities as well as more serious crime on the grounds that a 'rising tide of disorder' was blighting neighbourhoods and was itself a precursor to more serious crime (Straw and Michael, 1996). Following the Morgan Report and under the influence of left realism (see p56), a distinctive feature of the Labour Party's reformed crime and disorder agenda, characterised by 'community safety' (Gilling, 2007), was the emergence of a new policy problem namely 'anti-social behaviour'.

Up until that point, how to deal with 'anti-social behaviour' had primarily been an issue for housing managers and the first legal changes which directly addressed the issue of ASB were introduced by the Conservative Government in 1996. Before that, although tenants of social landlords in the UK could be evicted in certain prescribed circumstances relating to their behaviour, an eviction required evidence and decisions about the outcome were in the hands of the county court judge, not the landlord. The Housing Act 1996, however, established 'introductory tenancies' which meant that social housing tenants could be put on probation for a year before they gained security of tenure, with granting of the latter partly dependent on their behaviour. The power to evict

was also placed in the hands of the landlord. Injunctions were made obtainable against tenants or visitors who behaved anti-socially within and outside the property, and if violence or threats of violence were involved, there was a power of arrest. The Conservative Party also established a new offence of intentional harassment through the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (Burney, 1999; Hunter, 2006).

Although the Conservative Party legislated against ASB, it was New Labour that drove the agenda from the mid-1990s onwards. ASB had begun to permeate the Labour Party's rhetoric on law and order as far back as 1988 when Blair first used the term in a piece written for the Times in April of that year. In this article, and using events from his constituency as illustrations, Blair described the state of Britain as characterised by a climate of violence, a violence he identified as not being mere rowdiness or hooliganism but violence "done with premeditated malice and intent." The underlying cause of this violence, according to Blair, was not material deprivation, but a decline in the notion of 'community' and the (now familiar) idea that we have duty to our neighbours and our society as well as ourselves. It is within this context that Blair referred to 'anti-social behaviour':

"But none of us should escape responsibility. For we, collectively, determine the values of our society. When a sense of community is strong, that adds its own special pressure against anti-social behaviour" (Blair, 1988)



In their commitment to be tough on crime, New Labour really seized the issue of ASB when it was brought to the attention of the then Opposition Labour Party by the Social Landlords Crime and Nuisance Group in the mid-1990s (Burney, 1999). One of the first official publications that set out New Labour policy specifically in the area of ASB was the consultation paper 'A Quiet Life: Tough on Criminal Neighbours' published while the Party were still in opposition. Here, the problem was clearly constructed in terms of 'neighbours from hell' with the political impetus intrinsically connected to housing management and calls from social landlords for stronger powers to use against troublesome tenants (Burney, 1999., 2005). The issue of neighbour nuisance was depicted with reference to infamous 'problem' families that played a part in New Labour rhetoric for years to come. These were the high profile cases regarding Coventry City versus the Finnie brothers and 'Family X' from Jack Straw's Blackburn constituency:

"(A)cross Britain there are thousands of people whose lives are made a misery by the people next door, down the street or on the floor below. Their behaviour may not just be unneighbourly, but intolerable and outrageous" (Labour Party, 1995: 1)

In response, New Labour's key legislative power for dealing with ASB, the Community Safety Order, (later to be renamed the anti-social behaviour order or ASBO) was proposed. The political rationale for CSOs was outlined as the need to deal with 'chronic anti-social behaviour' which included multiple convictions, evidence of the commission of such multiple offences, or other evidence of unlawful acts likely to interfere with the peace and comfort of a

residential occupier. The CSO was primarily directed at what was then commonly termed “anti-social *criminal* behaviour.” The Labour Party updated its proposals following the responses to the consultation paper in ‘Protecting our Communities: Labour’s Plans for Tackling Criminal, Anti-Social Behaviour in Neighbourhoods’ (Labour Party, 1996) and set out the issues it sought to address in the following way, emphasising the widespread nature of the problem:

“Across Britain there are hundreds of thousands of people whose lives are being made a misery by those living nearby. A gang of youths, a group intent on racial harassment or a single household may act so selfishly, and without regard for others, as effectively to terrorise the neighbourhood” (Labour Party, 1996: 3).

Although initially ‘anti-social behaviour’ emerged as a problem closely associated with the management of social housing tenants, New Labour’s policy proposals were also being formulated within the youth justice field. The context of the mid-1990s was depicted as one in which “(y)outh crime is increasingly significant, community fear of it is widespread and young people’s life prospects are being destroyed” (Straw and Anderson, 1996). As such, in the aftermath of the murder of James Bulger, and against an emergent climate of a fear of a generation of children out of control, New Labour’s rhetoric on youth crime became increasingly tougher (Stephens and Squire, 2005; Gilling, 2007). Partially justified by an ethos of welfare protection, this opened the door to a set of proposals designed to tackle ‘delinquent’ (pre-criminal) youths both by ensuring they were confronted with their behaviour and “helped” to take more

personal responsibility for their actions but also to ensure parents were held accountable. A key source of disorder was presented as a minority of failing parents who did not know how, or were unwilling to, discharge their parental responsibilities, and who were, therefore, raising a generation of ill-behaved and anti-social children. In a discussion paper entitled *Parenting*, the then shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw and the then shadow minister for women Janet Anderson stated that:

“The evidence is now strong that the character of parental supervision in the pre-teens years holds the key to later delinquency. This raises questions about whether as a matter of public policy there should be more intervention in the upbringing of some children. Having and bringing up children is not a totally private act...This is particularly the case when the child grows up into a pattern of anti-social and offending behaviour...Turning the tide of delinquency and crime means looking at the early years of people's lives, their upbringing and the way parental responsibilities are discharged...We have to deal with the roots of offending. This means tackling the issue of parental responsibility and helping people to exercise it” (Straw and Anderson, 1996).

As Home Secretary, Straw later re-iterated this theme in *No More Excuses - A New Approach to Tackling Youth Crime in England and Wales* (1997, p4.6).

“Parents of young offenders may not directly be to blame for the crimes of their children, but parents have to be responsible for

providing their children with proper care and control. The courts need powers to help and support parents more effectively to keep their children out of trouble”

Although we should be wary of assuming the newness of the problem of 'ASB' and the responses to it (Hughes, 2007), it is exactly this that the New Labour government emphasised. According to politicians, the problems that constituted ASB were getting worse. ASB was consistently presented as a plaguing, degenerative and urgent problem that must be tackled in order to control crime and regenerate the most deprived neighbourhoods. Indeed, influenced by the rationale for zero-tolerance policing practices in the US (Gilling, 2007)<sup>2</sup>, the issue was presented as a warning sign that neighbourhoods might be tipping into a 'spirals of decline' and was a presage to more serious crime:

“It is not just specific crimes that affect our quality of life. The rising tide of disorder is blighting our streets, neighbourhoods, parks, towns and city centres. Incivility and harassment, public drunkenness, graffiti and vandalism all affect our ability to use open spaces and enjoy a quiet life in our own homes. Moreover, crime and disorder are linked. Disorder can lead to a vicious circle of community decline” (Straw and Michael, 1996: 4).

Furthermore, although ASB policy documents vigorously asserted that ASB was a non-tenure specific issue and a problem for all of society, from the beginning,

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<sup>2</sup> Similar, though not identical, policy agendas have been introduced in other countries, including the United States, to address concerns variously labelled as incivilities, public disorder and 'quality of life' offences (Beckett and Herbert, 2007; Gilling, 2007).



there was a continuing inference (partly backed up with statistics) that ASB is a problem particular to increasingly residualised social housing estates.

While still in opposition, New Labour's commitment to tackling ASB became enshrined in policy commitments in the Party's 1997 Manifesto. According to the manifesto, the then Conservative Government had forgotten the 'order' part of law and order, and New Labour's pledge was not only to be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime, but to "crackdown on petty crime and neighbourhood disorder" and "tackle the unacceptable level of anti-social behaviour and crime on our streets." Following their succession to power in 1997, the New Labour Government went on to introduce and extend an ever-increasing raft of legal powers with which to tackle ASB.

Despite no substantial evidence or 'hard facts' on the nature and scale of the problem (Prior, 2009; Gilling, 2007), ASB came to serve an emblematic role in the re-branding of the Labour Party (Garrett, 2006; Gilling, 2007). Prominent in this was MP for Birkenhead Frank Field (2003a). Field's campaign against ASB was driven by the concerns frequently raised in his constituency surgeries from intimidated and exasperated people who pleaded with him to take action against the "yob" element in the social housing estates where they lived. At the heart of the problem for Field was the dysfunctional family:

"...anti-social behaviour's recruiting sergeant is the dysfunctional family. Those families who fail to teach their young a proper sense of respect for others invariably have little idea how to control the resulting breakdown in normal behaviour" (Field, 2003a: 84)

Through various speeches, writings and Parliamentary interventions, Field developed a logic that was adopted wholesale or is at least reflected implicitly in the policy strategy embraced by the Labour government (Rodger, 2006). These legislative measures and policy programmes are discussed in the following section. Particular attention is drawn to the central role attributed to parenting and family life as the source and solution to problems of ASB.

### **New Labour's ASB policy and legislative programme: 1997 - 2009**

Soon after the Labour Party's election victory, it published the White Paper *No More Excuses: A New Approach to Tackling Youth Crime in England and Wales*. The proposals outlined therein heralded an expanded youth justice apparatus that would embrace a widening population of children and their parents through pre-emptive interventions (Pitts, 2001; McLaughlin, 2002; Muncie, 2002): "The Government is determined to reinforce the responsibility of young offenders - and their parents - for their delinquent behaviour" (Home Office, 1997b: p4.7). The paper proposed a range of provisions that would enable anti-social acts to be prosecuted more efficiently, ensure parents took responsibility for their children's behaviour, and target for early intervention young people deemed to be 'at risk.' This strategy represented a shift away from traditional Labour attempts to address children's offending through tackling welfare needs (Smith, 2003b) and was formalised in New Labour's flagship Crime and Disorder Act (CDA) 1998.

The CDA introduced a number of provisions that pertained specifically to the regulation of ASB. Child Safety Orders were framed as a way to 'intervene positively' with children under the age of 10 who: have committed an act that

would constitute an offence were they older; behaved in such a way as to suggest that s/he is at risk of offending; behaved in such a way as to cause or be likely to cause disruption or harassment to local residents; or had contravened a ban imposed under a local Child Curfew notice. The order requires a child to comply with certain requirements such as attendance at school, avoiding contact with disruptive children, or being home during certain hours at night (Home Office, 1997b). It was presented as a means of protecting children's welfare by preventing their eventual participation in serious crime (Home Office, 2000). Child Curfews were also introduced under which a LA or local police force could apply for an order to ban children under 10<sup>3</sup> from being in a public place during specified hours for a maximum duration of 90 days. The rationale behind introducing such a broad power was a desire to 'protect' the community by employing a 'nipping crime in the bud' ethos but also implicitly blaming parents for neglecting their children and allowing them to be unsupervised out on the streets late at night. Alongside these, Parenting Orders were designed to coerce parents who are unwilling to "make the effort" to improve their children's behaviour and help repair relationships in 'dysfunctional' families. These impose a 'proxy prevention' (Burney, 2005) on parents of offending or misbehaving children and were intended to 'make parents who wilfully neglect their responsibilities answerable to the court' (Home Office, 1997a, para.32):

"We know that the quality of relationships within families and the degree of parental supervision can be crucial in predicting which children are likely to get into trouble with the law. The Government

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<sup>3</sup> Through section 48 of the Criminal Justice Act, from 1<sup>st</sup> August curfews also applied to children under the age of 16 Local.



proposes more support for parents facing the problems of bringing up difficult and disorderly children, through the new parenting order" (Home Office, 1997b, para. 4.3).

Within the remit of youth justice (as opposed to education), Parenting Orders can be issued to parents in cases where their child has received a Child Safety Order, an ASBO, a Sex Offender Order or has been convicted of an offence. Those subject to an Order are required to attend counselling or guidance sessions aimed at helping them deal with their child and adhere to any other conditions specified in the order. A second, discretionary element places particular requirements on the parent to exercise control over their child's behaviour by, for example, ensuring that the child gets to school every day, or ensuring that he or she is home by a certain time at night. While Parenting Orders, Child Curfew Schemes and Child Safety Orders were significant developments, the ASBO formed the central pillar of New Labour ASB agenda. Effective for a minimum of two years, ASBOs place tailor made prohibitions on named individuals and can ban anyone of 10 years and over from carrying out specific acts or entering certain geographical areas. Although a civil charge, breach of an order is a criminal offence. Whereas the early policy papers linked ASBOs to criminal behaviour and recommended limits on the use of the order, by the time the most recent guidance had been produced (Home Office, 2006), these specifications were absent. Similarly, while early guidance inferred that ASBOs were intended as measures primarily to be used against adults, such an assumption was later abandoned.

The range of interventions introduced through the CDA illustrates how children and young people are conceptualised as agents fully responsible for themselves and their behaviour but also as impressionable, dependent on, and therefore victims of, their parents' shortcomings and lack of child rearing skills. Thus, while the issuing of ASBOs to children as young as ten assumes children to be responsible agents capable of self-policing and self regulation, Parenting Orders and Contracts shift the focus away from the child towards enabling parents to successfully regulate their children's behaviour (Such and Walker, 2005).

Five years after the CDA and frustrated both by the complete failure of LAs to use Child Curfews and by the slow take up of ASBOs, the Government embarked on a determined effort to encourage greater use of enforcement measures. This marked the next major phase in activity around the ASB agenda and started with the publication of the Government white paper "Respect and Responsibility – Taking a Stand Against Anti-Social Behaviour" (Home Office, 2003). The paper stated that responsibility for addressing ASB is a collective one which starts with parents, who are identified as accountable for the behaviour of their children; extends to neighbours, who should not endure noise; and continues into local communities, where people should not tolerate "yobbish behaviour" (Home Office, 2003: 3). While there is acknowledgment that poor educational attainment, unemployment, deprivation, and alcohol and drug misuse are all associated with ASB, the paper maintains that "fundamentally, ASB is caused by a lack of respect for other people" (Home Office, 2003: 7). Moreover, the blame for a large proportion of ASB occurring on council estates and inner city neighbourhoods is laid at the door of a small

number of “dysfunctional families” where “respect” is absent. Again, parents are constructed as the critical shapers of young people's conduct and the relationship between children and their parents is seen as the causal mechanism that determines whether tendencies toward ASB and subsequently crime will be prevented or not.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 (ASBA) that followed heralded the introduction of a further range of enforcement led interventions including Parenting Contracts which may involve attendance at parenting classes on a voluntary basis, as well as freestanding Parenting Orders for use against parents whose children have been engaged in ASB, as Holt (2008: 204. Original emphasis) explains, “*parents who have not committed any crime can receive a Parenting Order in response to their children who have not committed any crime*”. A suite of Fixed Penalty Notices (or 'spot fines') were introduced that applied to a range of summary offences mainly disorder and harassment where no admission of guilt is necessary and there is no criminal record except for non-payment, as well as Dispersal Orders which ban groups of more than two people gathering if their behaviour is deemed likely to result in a member of the public being harassed, alarmed or distressed.

The powers introduced in the ASBA formed part of New Labour's first official strategy for dealing with ASB, the 'Together' campaign, which followed the establishment of the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, based at the Home Office. The Together Action Plan published in October 2003, featured ‘ASBO ambassadors’, high profile road shows and extensive publicity, and was designed to put pressure on local community safety agencies to use the new

armoury of ASB measures established in both the CDA and ASBA. Other developments followed. In February 2004, the ASB Unit set up the Neighbour Nuisance Expert Panel consisting of representatives from local LAs, the police, youth offending teams, social services and the voluntary sector to advise and assist LAs and social landlords with their most “challenging” and “difficult” neighbour nuisance cases (Home Office, 2005). A further range of non-legal measures were also developed to address poor parenting, lack of parental supervision and weak parent/child relationships. In September 2004, the Government introduced ‘intensive parenting programmes’ in ten “Together Trailblazer areas”. Services varied between regions but included a combination of ‘supportive’ interventions alongside Parenting Orders, injunctions and ASBOs (Home Office, 2004). In February 2005, it was announced that these would be extended to 50 “action areas”.

“...we must now clamp down further on the problem families who, although small in number, cause disproportionate damage to their communities. That is why we are investing £1.25 million to ensure that those parents who persist in letting their kids run wild, or behave like yobs themselves, will face intensive rehabilitation in 50 more areas across the country, backed by the threat of enforcement” (Bleas, 2005).

The Government’s confidence in the benefits of enforcement remained unequivocal, however, despite the lack of empirical evidence on the efficacy of legal action. Further legislation contained in numerous Acts of Parliament, most notably the Police Reform Act 2000, Crime and Justice Act 2003 and the



Serious Organised Crime and Policing Act 2005 extended the range and scope of the enforcement options available. It is with these tools which communities damaged by ASB could allegedly be “won”, “claimed back” and “empowered” (Home Office, 2003):<sup>4</sup>

“Anti-social behaviour is a menace for many people and it needs to be dealt with swiftly and effectively. ASBOs make a real difference to people’s lives by helping to rebuild confidence in communities and bringing the actions of a selfish minority to task. The statistics published today show that local authorities are responding enthusiastically to the powers available to them” (Blears, 2005).

Despite the Government’s unwavering commitment to enforcement as the key to addressing ASB, during the early-2000s, there emerged increasing evidence of local resistance to the more disciplining elements of the Government’s ASB strategy and the national push to prioritise punitive interventions. The National Community Safety Network, for instance, called for more emphasis and resources to be given to early intervention with families, schools, and peers with the national ASB agenda more closely integrated to the ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda. Millie *et al* (2005) confirmed that local practitioners were increasingly sceptical of the simplistic binary divides used by the Home Office Together campaign to distinguish between the ‘law abiding’ citizens and the ‘anti-social’ perpetrator. Local community safety professionals’ understanding of the nature of the problem was also identified as being more nuanced than that of national actors and recognised that ASB was not simply a problem of ‘dysfunctional

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<sup>4</sup> It is also important to note that along side the legal measures, a host of non-statutory measures were also introduced to regulate and control behaviour, including Acceptable Behaviour Contracts.

families' but reflected a set of complex problems emerging as a result of conflict within communities with limited capacity for self-regulation (Millie *et al* 2005: ix).

Further criticisms of the Government's approach to ASB were made by Alvaro Gil-Robles, the European Human Rights Commissioner reporting on his visit to the UK in 2004. He noted that the Government appeared to be in the grip of 'ASBOmania' and identified four problems about ASBOs focusing on: first, their scope in terms of the broad range of prohibited behaviour; second, the ease with which such orders could be obtained; third, the use of publicity strategies associated with orders; and, finally, the serious consequences of breaches (Gil-Robles, 2005: 4). This echoes the concerns of a broad range of critical commentators about the way in which ASBOs seek to regulate individuals in ways that dispense with concerns for civil liberties and human rights (Ashworth, 2004; Flint and Nixon, 2006; Chakrabarti and Russell, 2008). The use of publicity strategies, or 'naming and shaming' campaigns, have been condemned widely for their possible stigmatising effects and the potential for reprisals (Flint and Nixon, 2006). Further, the very broad range of behaviour that falls within the scope of what constitutes 'anti-social behaviour' has also been called into question since it has given rise to a geographical ASBO 'lottery' (Gil-Robles 2005; Rowlands, 2005). The lack of a precise definition has also given rise to concerns about the inappropriate use of ASBOs (Statewatch, 2005; NAPO, 2005). Critics have pointed to the evidence that in many cases the subjects of orders have a wide range of underlying problems stemming from substance misuse, exclusions from school, learning difficulties and neurological disorders. It is argued that ASBOs not only fail to address 'root causes' of disruptive behaviour and provide individuals with the support they need, but the

effects of employing a regulatory, punitive mechanism on those with the least resources serves to exacerbate their problems (Scruton, 2005). Furthermore, it has been pointed out that the breadth of behaviour defined as anti-social makes it difficult to define the terms of orders in a way that does not invite inevitable breach. This is significant since the breach of an order is a criminal offence with potentially serious consequences. Given these concerns, the UN Committee on the Rights of Child (2008) has recommended that the State party conduct an independent review of ASBOs, with a view to abolishing their application to children.

Perhaps in response to such criticisms and in recognition that enforcement measures might not be working (in 2005, Home Office returns revealed the very high rate at which ASBOs (42%) had been breached with over half (55%) of those who had breached the terms of their order subject to an immediate custodial sentence), a decade after New Labour's policy response to ASB was first instantiated, the Government began to pay increasing attention to control measures that purportedly addressed the 'root causes' of ASB. After winning his third term as Prime Minister, Tony Blair announced that a particular priority for the Government would be to "bring back a proper sense of respect" (Blair, 2005a). Blair went on to launch his flagship third-term social policy, the Respect Action Plan (RAP) in January 2006. The Plan was presented as a broader approach to tackling ASB focusing not just on enforcement, but on the root causes of ASB:

"We must deal effectively with these families and individuals if we are to tackle both anti-social behaviour and its long-term causes.

Tackling their behaviour will require a different response from local services. Many individuals have multiple problems in addition to their anti-social behaviour. Mental health, alcohol, and drug problems, poor basic and life skills, domestic violence, poor school attendance, poverty and worklessness are recurrent issues that cannot be solved through short-lived actions from single local agencies. A recurring theme from research is that action needs to be concerted across local services and sustained for as long as necessary" (Respect Taskforce, 2006a: 21).

Although the ASB agenda was somewhat re-packaged in the RAP, the national programme of FIPs contained therein was emblematic of the persistent focus on the need for state intervention into the private lives of 'problem families'.

The Government outlined its plans to expand parenting provision through Children's Centres, extend school services and Parent School Advisors, establish a new Parenting Academy to train staff to deliver parenting support, introduce targeted programmes for parents of children and young people at risk, and expand the use of Parenting Contracts and Orders. The programme of reforms also included 'a new approach to the most challenging families'. It was here that the Government's policy commitment to establishing a network of Family Intervention Projects (FIPs), inspired by the Dundee Families Project (DFP), was born. Established in 1996, the DFP was the first 'supportive' service in the UK developed specifically to work with alleged perpetrators of ASB (see Chapter Three). The stated primary objective of FIPs is to change the behaviour of "a small number of highly problematic families that account for a



disproportionate amount of ASB" in order to "restore safety to their homes and the wider community" (Respect Task Force, 2006b). Although this initiative was framed as a 'new approach' which takes regard of the multiple problems that underlie disruptive behaviour, much of the justification for these projects was familiar:

"I want to signal a specific new front in the Government's response to anti-social behaviour. Poor parenting can lead directly through to anti-social behaviour. Bad parenting is not simply a private matter which is nothing to do with the rest of us. A few years ago the idea of the Government funding parenting classes or imposing parenting orders would have been considered bizarre or dangerous. We have to break through the stale exchange between the nanny state on the one side and complete free licence on the other[...]Family support schemes and parenting education initiatives that offer support, training and practical tips, within a clear curriculum have been shown to be very successful. We are looking closely at the Dundee Families Project which offers intensive support to families, but places them under strict conditions of co-operation" (Blair, 2005b).

By April 2007, 53 FIPs had been set up with £15 million of funding provided by the (now defunct) Respect Taskforce.

Tony Blair's replacement by Gordon Brown as Prime Minister in 2008 heralded the creation of the 'Youth Taskforce' in the Department for Children, Schools and Families to take forward the respect agenda. Although this move distanced

the Brown administration from an agenda very much driven by Tony Blair, it is clearly evident that commitment to intensive family support is set to continue apace. In 2008, the Department for Children, Schools and Families invested £18 million to sustain and expand the national network of FIPs; at the time of writing there were 67 in operation across England and Wales. In 2009, Communities and Local Government (CLG) also committed £1.2m to help the development of the FIP programme through the Supporting People budget. The Department of Health followed suit to provide £3m over 2009/10 and £3m over 2010/11 to improve the health contribution to FIPs. In addition, new models of intervention based on the FIP model formed core parts of the Youth Taskforce Action Plan and The Social Exclusion Task Force Families at Risk Review. The former set out a package of actions and funding aimed at tackling young peoples' involvement in ASB through: enforcement measures, 'non-negotiable support' to address the root causes of 'bad behaviour', and better prevention. A key development arising out of this plan included investment of £13m over three years (2008/9-2012/13) to establish 20 Intensive Intervention Projects as an extension of the Family Intervention Project model (DCSF, 2008) as well as a commitment to establishing a new 'youth crime' Family Intervention Project in every LA (there are currently 42). The Social Exclusion Task Force led a cross-government review on 'families at risk' (Cabinet Office, 2008) which aims to improve outcomes for families at risk, and, in particular, to reduce the impacts of parental problems on children's life chances. Arising from the review was the launch of the £16m Family Pathfinder program, funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The Family Pathfinders aim to improve outcomes for families caught in a 'cycle of low achievement',

particularly those who are not being effectively engaged and supported by existing services and are also based on the FIP model.<sup>5</sup>

### **Linking disorderly behaviour to 'problem families'**

As this overview of policy and legislative measures indicates, 'problem families', and the need for state intervention with regard to them, has remained a constant theme in New Labour's ASB agenda. They are depicted as a distinct minority "who disrupt the quality of life of whole communities and make the lives of residents around them miserable" (Respect Taskforce, 2006a: 21). Causal responsibility for such behaviour is primarily attributed to parents portrayed as unable or unwilling to regulate the behaviour of their children. New Labour's theoretical basis for the linking of disorderly behaviour with the family and parenting is, however, complex. Critical analysis of the ever-evolving ASB policy agenda has highlighted how it does not coalesce around a coherent theoretical framework but is built on a mixed bag of understandings, ideologies and concepts, many of which have been influenced by ideas and practices from the United States (Muncie, 2002, 2006; Gilling, 2007; Hughes, 2007). The key discourses that frame the dominant ASB narrative and work to centralise the 'problem family' are communitarianism, Murray's theory of underclass, risk-factor research, broken-windows and left-realism. These are summarised below:

#### ***Communitarianism***

To a large degree, New Labour's ASB agenda is informed by the belief that ASB is precipitated by the development of 'cultures of self-interest' and

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<sup>5</sup> As intervention into family life continues to expand as the key means of addressing ASB, the use of ASBOs continue to decline. The number of ASBOs issued peaked in 2005 with 4,122 granted in that year. However, by 2007 the number had fallen to 2299.

encompasses a vision of an improved moral order. This thinking is informed by the “moral authoritarian communitarianism” most prominently associated with Amitai Etzioni. At the heart of this perspective is a condemnation of the current system of market individualism and its destructive effects on community life. From this perspective, the ‘community’ is seen to be bound by commonly held norms, values and practices which individuals are expected to adhere to and which are seen as essential for human fulfilment. Human beings are understood as essentially social and this brings with it an assumption that the ‘community’ should be fostered and supported (Barlow and Duncan, 2000). Moreover, individuals are viewed as having duties to their communities which must be fulfilled for them to be legitimately included. Inclusion is therefore conditional; we gain rights from the execution of responsibility (Driver and Martell, 1997).

The charge is, however, that we have come to think of rights as things we possess in opposition to our communities. Reminiscing back to the apparently ordered 1950’s America, Etzioni claims that market individualism has not only destroyed community life but has engendered ‘anti-community’ dispositions in which individuals put their own self-interest above the interests of others. The result is a ‘decline’ or ‘failure’ of various social institutions including the family, neighbourhood associations, schools, churches or the media, on the grounds of each individual’s right to create his own lifestyle. According to communitarian discourse, there is an increasing ‘parenting deficit’ as mothers are out at work and fathers may be absent, leaving children without moral guidance or emotional support (Barlow and Duncan, 2000). It is argued that individuals are not only encouraged to put themselves and their own concerns above those of



others, but people no longer readily support one another due to a growing disengagement with community processes and activities as people become alienated and apathetic. These developments are perceived to have had a particularly significant effect on deprived communities as the system grants social and political power to those in control of material wealth<sup>6</sup>. According to communitarian thinkers, this rise in individualism and the disengagement with collective concerns has brought with it a host of moral problems including a disregard for the law which has come to be viewed as an inhibiting set of regulations which interfere with individuals' pursuit of their own interests.

Communitarians suggest that new social and political processes and practices are required to combat these effects of modern liberal society. It calls for restoration of civic virtues and a shoring up of the moral foundations of society: "we need to return to a society in which certain actions are viewed as beyond the pale" (Etzioni, 1995: 24). This entails the establishment of a clear moral discourse in order to "restore the sway of moral voices" (1995: 34). The need to cultivate parental responsibility is emphasised as an essential part of this and the process of protecting communities:

"Parents must ensure that their children understand the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, the harm that could be caused to others, and why violations of the well-being of others would not be tolerated.

Parents thus need to enforce discipline within their homes so that discipline will also prevail in the community at large" (Tam, 1998: 123).

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<sup>6</sup> However communitarianism is explicitly about shoring up the moral order and so does not address economic questions (Gilling, 2007)

The strong influence of Etzioni's communitarianism, whereby individual's are expected to conform to the moral values set down by their community in return for 'rights' and 'conditional inclusion' in that community, has been an unambiguous theme in New Labour's formulations of the problems and solutions to ASB:

"People cannot continue to expect something for nothing - they must realise rights in our communities can only come when they take responsibility for their actions and neighbourhood. That's why I am setting out how the Government plans to reclaim communities for the decent, law-abiding majority" (Blunkett, 2003b)

The communitarian strand of thought that has increasingly informed New Labour policy works to attribute responsibility to individual perpetrators and 'communities', bringing with it an emphasis on the need to establish self-governing citizens and communities in turn enabling a partial withdrawal of state intervention:

"This White Paper [Respect and Responsibility] is all about this sense of responsibility: an acceptance that anti-social behaviour, in whatever guise, is not acceptable and that together we will take responsibility to stamp it out, whenever we come across it. This responsibility starts in the family, where parents are accountable for the actions of their children and set the standards they are to live by. It extends to neighbours, who should not have to endure noise

nuisance. It continues into local communities, where people take pride in the appearance of estates and do not tolerate vandalism, litter or yobbish behaviour” (Home Office, 2003: 3).

Etzioni’s influence has also justified politicians paying particular attention to the family and parenting which has been identified by the New Labour Government as one of the most important mechanisms for transmitting moral values and nurturing individual responsibility (Blair, 1988; McLaughlin, 2002; Muncie, 2002):

“The first thing is the building block of society which is the family. We want the family to take responsibility for building decency and respect into how they teach, prepare and bring up their children” (Blunkett, 2004).

### ***The underclass thesis***

The notions of responsibility and moral obligation at the heart of moral authoritarian communitarianism dovetail with Murray’s theory of the underclass. For Murray (1990), three factors help to identify an emerging underclass: illegitimacy, crime and withdrawal from the labour force. Illegitimacy, defined as a situation where a child has been without a father from day one, for Murray, is the best indicator of an emerging underclass. Such children, Murray suggests, have not been the first consideration of the parents, may be regarded as a mere encumbrance and are more likely to ‘run wild’. Moreover, they grow up without positive male role models and fail, therefore, to learn to be responsible parents, neighbours and workers. The ‘habitual criminal’ is also said to be a “classic member of the underclass” who lives off mainstream society rather than

participating in it. According to Murray, rising crime rates affect those neighbourhoods where the underclass is 'taking over' in which people engage in crime as a matter of course and it becomes impossible for parents to raise their children to have certain moral standards. Lastly, Murray argues that there has been a change in attitude towards the world of work among the underclass brought about by a lack of socialisation and benefit dependency, a result of reforms in social policy that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s which allegedly changed the 'rules of the game', a shift which disproportionately affected low income young people. This created a world, Murray suggests, in which the chances of being punished for a crime fell, reduced stigma and increased economic feasibility through benefit provision associated with being a single mother.

For Murray, the underclass are a *type* of poor people whose children grow up ill-schooled and ill-behaved not due to their position in society (e.g. long-term unemployed), but by their "deplorable behaviour in response to that condition, e.g. unwilling to take the jobs that are available" (Murray, 1990: 82). Murray's is a behavioural definition whereby behaviour, attitudes and values are the root cause and the problem of the underclass; 'excluded' populations are conceived of as morally deficient:

"they have learnt to be irresponsible because of their welfare dependency, which means they do not have to work, do not have to take their responsibilities seriously, and do not feel any compulsion to abide by normative standards of behaviour and decency" (Gilling, 2007: 167)



The solution for Murray was more punitive and deterrent criminal justice policies, the re-stigmatisation of illegitimacy and the sanctioning of state benefits from unmarried mothers and men who refuse to work. The underclass debate has, therefore, an enforcing and strong moralising tone (Gilling, 2007).

In the UK, the threat of the underclass took on an increasingly sharp focus throughout the early 90s, in a context of high crime rates, headline-grabbing murders, rising fear of crime and new forms of disorder, including 'white riots' in 'sink estates' (McLaughlin, 2002; Gilling, 2007). Murray suggested that what had occurred earlier in the US in the late 1960s was now taking place in Britain which risked being 'plagued' by an even bigger underclass. Echoing Murray, 'ethical socialists' such as Dennis and Erdos (1992) proposed that it was a matter of 'common-sense' that crime in general, and juvenile crime in particular, was the inevitable by-product of the disintegration of the 'family'. They argued that parents who evaded their responsibilities produced and (literally) reproduced immorality. This individualist and behavioural explanation illustrates marked continuities with the claims of other long-standing intellectual traditions which attribute the social exclusion and disadvantage that generate criminal behaviour and ASB to "cycles of deprivation" reproduced from one generation to the next. The notion of a cycle of deprivation is essentially a behavioural interpretation of poverty that stresses the importance of intergenerational transmission and is bound up with notions of the problem family that emphasise household squalor and inadequate parenting rather than a cycle of disadvantage that stresses structural factors (Walker, 1996; Welshman, 2008a).

The term 'underclass' is not often used explicitly in New Labour's ASB discourse due to pejorative connotations and the controversy surrounding the term (Hawarth and Manzi, 1999), but it resonates clearly with much of the dominant political discourse on the 'perpetrators' of ASB. Indeed, the subject of ASB legislation is defined in equally judgmental terms with elements of stigma and individual culpability inferred. The anti-social 'other', the "yobs", the "thugs" and the "dysfunctional family", are distinguished as an uncivilised minority distinct from the 'hard-working, law-abiding majority' and bear all the hallmarks of Murray's underclass:

"I know that frightening gangs on street corners, neighbours from hell, tearaway children and drug pushers are the very things which make us feel uneasy and unsafe. They can ruin lives - they can certainly ruin the quality of our lives. Every town has problems with anti-social behaviour whether that is on a particular estate or in the town or city centre. A yobbish minority can still make the lives of hard working citizens a living hell." (Blunkett, 2003b)

ASB policies also draw explicitly on notions of the transmission and inheritance of deprivation within an "explicit problem family vocabulary" (Welshman, 2008a: 82) that bears striking similarities to cycle of deprivation hypotheses prevalent in the 1970s:

"We need to offer the chance for children who have been brought up in dysfunctional families for generations – a generational

disadvantage and disengagement with civilized behaviour – to be able to pull round" (Blunkett, 2003c)

Echoing the communitarian strand of thought, the underclass thesis also feeds a narrative of blame which attributes problems of ASB, not to structural, but to behavioural causes, and specifically, to the failings of families and parents. In both the communitarianism of Etzioni and Murray's notion of the underclass, a clear moral discourse is central in allowing ethical perspectives to take centre-stage. In turn, this has legitimised the introduction of a range of measures through which families' behaviour is modified, either by negative sanctions or by a process of training, re-socialization and moral reformation aimed at transforming their "value orientations" (Rodger, 2006).

"Because the root cause of antisocial behaviour is the failure of a small but growing number of families to teach their offspring what I call the common decencies, or social virtue, we need to consider who could act in the place of parents when the real parents cannot or will not" (Field, 2003b).

### ***The risk factor prevention paradigm***

Alongside responsabilisation and remoralisation, a commitment to 'actuarial justice' which entails an application of risk management to criminal justice is also prominent in ASB discourse. While there are a number of competing psychological and psychiatric theoretical models that have supported the explanation that 'delinquency' can be explained by parental behaviour, it is the risk factor model that has come to dominate today (Holt, 2008). Coming to prominence in 1990s, David Farrington is perhaps the foremost academic

associated with this model as a result of his highly influential longitudinal study on criminal careers *The Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development*. The research was concerned with understanding 'within-individual' change and on the predictors of onset, persistence, escalation, and desistence of offending. This approach assumes that it is possible to identify developmental sequences in which non-criminal behaviour leads to criminal behaviours. On the basis of his research, Farrington established prevalent and interrelated risk factors that supposedly *cause* ASB and criminality. Farrington suggests that 'an antisocial personality syndrome' may exist among persistent offenders and claims that it is possible to identify with reasonable accuracy individuals who are at risk of ASB and criminal careers through the identification of major risk factors. Acting on these is now taken to be the most hopeful methods of prevention. As such, research in this field has a particular interest in children and young people, in part, because research suggests that children's anti-social acts are 'the single best predictor' of adult ASB (Nuffield Council of Bioethics, 2002)<sup>7</sup>. According to Farrington (1997), there a number of "major risk factors" that are important predictors of offending. These include: impulsivity and intelligence, as well as family, socio-economic, school and situational factors. This said, establishing the interaction or independent influences of any one risk factor on offending and ASB is not easy. According to Farrington, the criminal career approach is not a criminological theory but rather a framework within which theories may be tested. Notwithstanding this, Farrington claims that it is possible to identify with reasonable accuracy individuals who are at risk of ASB (and therefore criminal careers).

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<sup>7</sup> 'Anti-social behaviour' has two primary and overlapping histories: 1) legal and policy developments in housing, crime prevention and community safety, and 2) psy-medical interests, fuelled by clinical diagnoses and academic research (Cleland and Tisdall, 2005). With regard to the latter, 'anti-social behaviour' is a concept used by mental health clinicians, criminologists and personality psychologists (Nuffield Council of Bioethics 2002; Rutter *et al*, 1998).



This study, and others like it (Squires and Stephen, 2005), have been highly influential in focusing crime prevention and efforts to tackle ASB on psychogenic antecedents of criminal and ASB which are believed to lie in the immediate environment of the individual (usually the child), namely the family/parents. This was illustrated in the White Paper 'No More Excuses' where it was stated:

"We know a good deal about the factors which are associated with youth crime. Research has confirmed that key factors related to youth criminality are: being male; being brought up by a criminal parent or parents; living in a family with multiple problems; experiencing poor parenting and lack of supervision; poor discipline in the family and at school; playing truant or being excluded from school; associating with delinquent friends; and having siblings who offend...but the single most important factor in explaining criminality is the quality of a young person's home life, including parental supervision" (Home Office, 1997b, para. 1.5)

"Parenting has the most critical influence on a child's behaviour and his or her life chances. Ineffective parenting has repeatedly been shown to be strongly associated with anti-social and offending behaviour" (Respect Taskforce, 2007b: 1)

The discourse is one of intervening early based on the targeting of known risk-factors to prevent and reduce crime and ASB. This serves as justification to

introduce measures that “reinforce” the responsibilities of parents and that enable the state to intervene in the relationships between young people and their parents: “Parents have a crucial role in preventing their children committing criminal and anti-social acts” (Home Office, 1997b). Thus, the major preoccupation with the family that arises from communitarianism and underclass theories also coalesce with, and are fed by, individualising and pathologising ‘risk factor’ research which suggests that family criminality; large family size; poor parenting skills; parental attitudes and family conflict are a strong predictors of future criminality (Muncie, 2002; Jamieson, 2005).

### ***Preventing community decline***

ASB policy is also connected to wider developments in policing, in particular the rise of zero-tolerance policing which reasserted police sovereignty and brought with it a focus on ‘quality of life’ issues (Gilling, 2007). It was theoretically underpinned by the ‘theory’ put forward by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in the essay Broken Windows: the Police and Neighbourhood Safety which appeared in the journal Atlantic Monthly in 1982. The latter has received unqualified acclaim in the policy arena particularly in the US from where it has fast been exported (Harcourt, 2001). The central hypothesis on which broken windows is based, is that disorder and crime are inextricably linked in a linear, developmental sequence. The key argument is that a broken window smashed and left unrepaired signals that ‘no one cares.’ This lowers communal standards and invites further vandalism. Not only that, but “untended behaviour” also leads to a breakdown of community controls. It leads residents to view an area as uncontrolled and uncontrollable, and fear, therefore, that crime, even violent crime, is also on the increase. In response to this fear, people take protective measures and modify their behaviour by using streets less and leading a more

atomised existence. This has the consequence of weakening natural community controls and leaves an area vulnerable to criminal invasion.

Broken windows serves as a metaphor for other disorderly, undesirable and disreputable elements in a neighbourhood. According to Wilson and Kelling, the behaviour of panhandlers, drunks, drug addicts, rowdy teenagers, prostitutes, loiterers and the mentally disturbed, left unchecked, also leads to fear of crime, more serious crime and urban flight and decay:

“The unchecked panhandler is in effect the first broken window. Muggers and robbers, whether opportunistic or professional, believe that they reduce their chances of being caught or even identified if they operate on streets where potential victims are already intimidated by prevailing conditions. If the neighbourhood can not keep a bothersome pan handler from annoying passersby, the thief may reason, it is even less likely to call the police to identify a potential mugger or to interfere if the mugging actually takes place” (Wilson and Kelling, 1982: 9).

The influential appeal of the Broken Windows thesis in New Labour's ASB policy is perhaps most striking in the 2003 White Paper which is replete with references to the 'spiral of anti-social behaviour' and the need to 'reclaim' the streets:

“The anti-social behaviour of a few, damages the lives of many. We should never underestimate its impact. We have seen the way

communities spiral downwards once windows get broken and are not fixed, graffiti spreads and stays there, cars are left abandoned, streets get grimmer and dirtier, youths hang around street corners intimidating the elderly. The result: crime increases, fear goes up and people feel trapped" (Home Office, 2003: 3).

The theory provides a clear rationale for policing minor disorder and incivilities, as well as certain 'undesirables' that, as the theory goes, if left unchecked could tip a neighbourhood into a spiral of decline. The introduction of a range of legislative measures designed to address ASB, for example, Child Curfews, ASBOs, Dispersal Orders, are often justified by appeals to this thesis. The assumptions of the broken windows theory provide justification for the coercive and authoritarian policing of both environmental signs of disorder but also marginalised people and spaces, and uncivil, but often not criminal, behaviours. Thus, 'broken windows' provided New Labour with a discourse that enabled "the neighbours from hell" to be represented "as the enemy within" (Gilling, 2007:137) and whose presence forewarns more serious crime.

"Hard core' offenders are people who repeatedly act anti-socially, often in relation to different people, locations and situations. The numbers are small. However, they cause disproportionate problems for other people. In some cases it can be whole families, or groups of families, who are hard-core offenders. These families can effectively terrorise the community they live in and they may often be linked to crime and drug abuse. In fragile communities, where there



is already a problem of low housing demand, their actions can be catastrophic" (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000: 61)

### ***Left Realism***

Left realism which came to prominence in the mid 1980s with Jock Young as its most prominent founder has also left its mark on the ASB agenda. It was portrayed as an alternative to both the punishment-oriented Conservative Government policies and traditional left policies. The former pointed to rising crime rates, held offenders responsible and emphasised punishment as the solution, while the left refuted crime rates, depicted the offender as victim of the state and media panic, and championed the defence of the community against the state. Young (1997) suggests that the central aim of left realism was to be faithful to its subject matter - crime. This means accepting crime as real and accepting the reality of rules, rule breakers, offenders and victims, particularly hidden victims. Left realism takes as its starting point the belief that crime should be recognised as a real problem particularly for women, sections of the working class and ethnic minorities. Mainly through local victim surveys, left realists showed that the poor suffered the most from crime and disorder and that many crimes go unreported leaving many 'hidden victims'. The latter they suggested is particularly significant in high crime and deprived neighbourhoods. For left realists, crime is seen as an endemic product of the class and patriarchal nature of advanced industrial society. It is not, therefore, behavioural or a product of abnormality but of the normal workings of late modern industrial society which have precipitated widespread individualism and relative deprivation, features which, when combined together, Young postulates, are criminogenic by their nature.

Left realism points to the dyadic nature of crime - crime and the responses to it - which interact, respond to and shape each other. This means taking seriously the critique of crime as media induced moral panic, and acknowledging as rational public concerns about crime. However, Young suggests that the reaction to crime cannot be studied independently of crime itself; the formation of social problems can not be studied without a focus on social problems themselves. A main tenet of left realism, therefore, is that the subject matter of criminology should be a contextual understanding of the four key elements that make up a crime: A victim, and offender, formal control and informal control. This produces what Young calls a crime square involving social relations and interactions between the public, the offender, the victim and agencies of social control. Left realists suggest that although priority should be given to tackling the cause of crime, intervention should occur at all points of the square. This means employing both situational and social crime prevention as well as interventions that have both long and short term goals. The latter are concerned with better policing, community involvement, protecting victims, whereas the former interventions are about dealing with the wider social structure in which crime takes place rather than the immediate social context of a criminal act. Left realist criminologists therefore gave:

“...methodological and conceptual priority to criminal victimisation and in so doing backed law enforcement strategies to tackle urban crime and the fear of crime, as well as multi-agency approaches to crime prevention and community safety, that recognised the simultaneous need to address criminal opportunities and criminal

motivations and to activate networks of informal social control" (Gilling, 2007: 31).

The architects of left realism intended its use as a means of reinvigorating Labour's position on law and order, while not abandoning more traditional concerns around police powers and accountability. Many Labour controlled LAs recognised the opportunities this afforded in terms of addressing the lived experiences and concerns of their urban electorates and the political position eventually fed through to the Labour Party at large evidenced in the 1987 and 1992 manifestos (Gilling, 2007). Left realism, however, fitted neatly with the mood of 'punitive populism' increasingly adopted by both parties and also directly influenced the emerging ASB agenda (Burney, 1999). In a speech given by Jack Straw on the 8<sup>th</sup> April 1998 during the Crime and Disorder Bill's second reading, he contextualises the focus on ASB as being a triumph of community politics:

"The Bill marks out the new approach to policy making by which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister transformed my party from one of opposition to one of government. The Bill represents a triumph of community politics over detached metropolitan elites. In the early 1980s, my party lost its way, not least by failing to listen to those whom we claimed to represent, and by failing to learn from them. My right honourable friend broke decisively with all that and ensured that our policy making would be inspired above all by our constituents. Among many of the other things, that led us to a

serious examination of how to reverse the apparently inexorable rise in anti-social behaviour and teenage crime”.

As Hughes (2007) points out, the connection between poverty, deprivation and victimisation at the heart of left realism was however somewhat expunged from the New Labour political pronouncements on the matter of ASB. Rather, their approach was more akin to right realism - a political position influenced by ‘rational choice’ and ‘routine activities’ theory - which also argues that crime is a serious problem, but, unlike left realism, considers individuals to be essentially self-interested and deviant behaviour a rational-choice. It stresses authority and deference to the law, together with individual responsibility and punishment for wrong-doing (Stephens and Squires, 2005). New Labour’s ASB discourse (particularly in the earlier phase of the agenda) replete with reference to the anti-social ‘other’: the “yobbish minority”, “frightening gangs”, “neighbours from hell”, “tearaway children” (Blunkett, 2003a., 2003b) reflects this. The perpetrator is presented as a feckless, undisciplined individual, unconcerned for others:

“At the heart of ASB is a lack of respect for others – the simple belief that one can get away with whatever one can get away with”  
(Blunkett, 2003a)

This approach emphasises that ASB or ‘yobbish’ culture can be controlled because the individual can be made responsible for his behaviour and thus serves as justification for individualistic solutions and a punitive, enforcement orientated approach (Gilling, 1997).



### **The 'problem family': continuities in the labelling of families**

Underpinned by a (sometimes contradictory mix) of communitarianism, the underclass thesis, risk-factor research, broken windows and left-realism, New Labour's ASB policy and practice agenda is replete with references to dysfunctional parents and problem families identified as both the site of the problem and solution to disorderly conduct. Garrett (2007) has argued, however, that if we are to fully understand the organising principles related to the inception and proliferation of the family at the heart of the ASB agenda, there is a need to 'look backwards' and contextualise the re-emergence of the 'problem family'. Locating this classificatory label within an historical context serves to draw attention to the way in which erstwhile governmental rationalities and technologies may also be informing 'new' ways of working.

Since the nineteenth century philanthropists have attempted to remoralise the poor and there are clear continuities between the ASB agenda and earlier policies (Mooney, 2003; Rodger, 2008). The notion that the family is in 'crisis' has a long history (Goldson and Jamieson, 2002) and the term 'problem family' can be seen as a 'chronological stepping stone in the history of the underclass concept over the last 120 years' (Welshman, 2008b: 504). Marking a distinct phase in the formulation of ideas about an 'underclass', it became a commonplace term in academic, political and other public discourses in the UK in the 1940s. Indeed, it was the Second World War and the evacuation of city children and mothers in 1939, together with the Blitz of May 1941, which unearthed hitherto 'hidden' social problems and gave rise to concerns about the family. In this context, the unhealthy condition of "anti-social urban children" and perceived failure of their parents to properly care for them came to the

public's attention. Such families were viewed as a breeding ground for 'juvenile delinquency' and the style in which they lived, perceived as a threat to themselves and others (Welshman, 1999). As such:

"...the perception that the manner of life of some poor families was such as to threaten both their own health and that of those forced to come into contact with them, and prompted the sense that their disturbed and disturbing characteristics required energetic action to render them safe as neighbours and parents" (Starkey, 2000: 541)

Credit to the first use of the term 'problem families' (in a quasi-technical sense) is generally attributed to the Women's Group on Public Welfare. In the "Our Towns" report published in 1943 the group claimed that 'problem families' were:

...on the edge of pauperism and crime, riddled with mental and physical defects, in and out of the courts for child neglect, a menace to the community, of which the gravity is out of all proportion to the numbers (Women's Group on Public Welfare, 1943: xiii, in Welshman, 1999, p. 460).

It was the Pacifist Service Units (a voluntary organisation that adopted a case work approach to helping families found homeless through bombing), however, that were instrumental in bringing the 'problem family' into the public gaze when, in 1945, members of PCUs in Liverpool, Manchester and Stepney published an account of their wartime activities entitled "Problem Families" (Starkey, 2000). Informed by the biological determinist ideas of the eugenicists it

was personal as opposed to environmental factors that were stressed as the root of the issue (Welshman, 2008b; Starkey, 2000). Moreover, it was the 'feckless' mother of the 'problem family' who was commonly identified as the chief obstacle and impediment on account of her failure to be suitably domesticated (Garrett, 2007). In depictions of the 'problem family', the culpability of the mother was prevalent and stress was placed on maternal irresponsibility, poor organisation, failure in childcare, and ill-equipped, infested and dirty homes. Treating, or at least containing, such families was attempted through various technologies. One such solution after the Second World War, driven by a perception that British cities were plagued by 'problem families' who needed rehabilitation, saw the rebirth of Pacifist Service Units as a new national organisation named Family Service Units in 1948. These Units became the key voluntary social work agency in the field in the post-war period (and it should be noted bore a striking similarity to family support projects under scrutiny here discussed in detail in Chapter Three):

"The form of intervention they developed became known as *intensive family casework* and emphasised the importance of building close links with the family, in nearly all cases with the mother, and establishing a pattern of close supervision – so close that some were visited two or three times a day or even more. Treatment was directed towards remedying faults thought to be characteristic of the failing mother and emphasised the successful performance of such tasks as getting the children out of bed in time to go to school and taking them there; washing and ironing; regular fine-combing, and if necessary deinfestation, of children's hair;

cleaning and cooking; putting the children to bed at a reasonable and regular time" (Starkey, 2000: 549. My emphasis).

During the Second World War and from the late 1940s to the 1960s, 'social rehabilitation centres', such as the Brentwood Recuperation Centre for Mothers and Children, were also created in the UK (Welshman, 2008b). These were influenced by developments in other countries particularly the Netherlands which established various residential experiments for the rehabilitation and re-training of "non-normal" and "socially weak" families in the inter-war period. This residential option was seen as an alternative to prison for mothers convicted of child neglect and as a complement to efforts to tackle 'problem families' in their own home.

From the mid-1950s, the concept of the 'problem family' came in for greater scrutiny and in the 1960s a broad coalition of practitioners and theorists, largely in the field of social work, emerged who were opposed to the concept and a greater tendency to stress economic difficulty came to the fore (Welshman, 2008b). Since then, although various classificatory terms have been used to identify segments of the population deemed 'undeserving', as the sections above demonstrate, the 'problem family' (along with dysfunctional parenting or mothering) has once again permeated professional discourses, particularly in relation to the 'anti-social'.

Alongside this conceptual continuity in relation to the problem family is the presumption that 'dysfunctional' parents are to blame for their children's 'offending' behaviour. Goldson and Jamieson (2002) draw attention to how the



'improper conduct of parents' was identified as one of the 'principal causes' of 'juvenile delinquency' as far back as the early part of the nineteenth century by the first public inquiry into youth crime. Such observations were consolidated throughout the nineteenth century and beyond with an accumulated 'scientific' knowledge. In numerous pieces of legislation (including the Reformatory Schools Act 1884, the Industrial Schools Act 1882, the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, the Criminal Justice Act 1982, the Criminal Justice Act 1991), Arthur (2005: 237) contends that the accusation is blunt: "all parents are to blame for the delinquent actions of those children". Consequently, despite the emphasis alternating between benign 'welfare' and 'punitive' youth justice strategies, the notion of a 'parenting deficit' has served to legitimise (increasing) forms of state intervention into 'family life' to circumscribe youth offending:

"certain types of 'inadequate parenting' are viewed as posing particular risks, with low levels of parental involvement/attachment, a lack of parental supervision and harsh and erratic discipline thought to be likely to encourage juvenile delinquency...Notwithstanding the recognition that youth crime can arise from many sources both within the family and in the other systems where children live, the place and shape of family relationships and parental responsibilities has proved a recurrent theme within youth justice policy agendas of successive administrations" (Jamieson, 2005: 183).

Goldson and Jamieson (2002) suggest that from the nineteenth century to the present, a discourse of individual responsibility has worked to displace the

significance of structural context (poverty and inequality), something returned to in Chapter Three.

Although families with children caught in the youth justice system or at the extreme end of the continuum of risk have always been subject to state intervention, the UK has historically been considered either not to have a family policy as such or, at the most, to have implicit family policies. With the emergence of Conservative administrations from 1979, child rearing came to be seen almost as private lifestyle choices with few supports offered to parents, despite significant changes in the working patterns of mothers and family composition (Featherstone, 2006). There is a broad consensus that in the UK, outside of the school, until quite recently children have been viewed as the responsibility of their individual parents (in practice, mainly mothers) (Featherstone, 2006). However, since 1997, under New Labour there has been a shift away from the notion that bringing up children is largely a private matter. Indeed, there has been an explicit concern with the family and parenting as a designated area of policy intervention and, as this chapter has demonstrated, this shift has been heavily influenced by efforts to address public concerns about crime and public order (Gillies, 2005a):

“The family, once perceived as the bastion of private life into which the state had no right to intervene except to protect life and limb, now is the site of much government activity and intervention. Not only does the state see fit to try to regulate what people put on their dinner tables with endless (and often contradictory) advice and

guidance, but it has taken a much more proactive role in parenting"  
(Crawford, 2006: 456).

The centre-staging of 'problem' families in New Labour's ASB agenda therefore echoes developments in other policy domains beyond crime control. In the social policy and practice arena, two Green Papers have been particularly influential: *Supporting Families* (Home Office, 1998), and *Every Child Matters* (HM Treasury, 2003). Amongst other things, the former focused attention on the particular role of parenting in the development and prevention of offending and ASB by young people, and marked the beginning of a period of intense policy focus on the interface between outcomes for children and inputs by parents. *Every Child Matters* also placed supporting parents and carers at the top of a list of four key areas for development. These developments opened up new spaces for the language and practices of family support to circulate (Featherstone, 2006; Lister, 2006). The resulting refocusing of resources, including a firmer emphasis on prevention and early intervention (some targeted, some universal) has seen family support taking a central position in the national policy and practice picture and has given rise to a well established 'parenting support industry' (Moran *et al*, 2004) that aims to deal not only with 'anti-social families' or offending behaviour but also with poverty, social exclusion and disadvantage (Rodger, 2008):

"...an outsider tracking the thrust of policy and practice development over recent years might be forgiven for concluding that we as a nation had decided that almost any social ill - poverty, social exclusion, crime and anti-social behaviour, poor educational

attainment, poor mental and emotional health - could be remedied by improving parenting skills" (Moran *et al*, 2004: 14)

Published in 2001, a mapping exercise of family support services in the UK by the National Family and Parenting Institute estimated that 40% of all services had been set up in the previous five years (Moran *et al*, 2004). A substantial proportion of these services were provided by the voluntary sector, but central government drove the expansion with a series of national area-based initiatives delivering support services for parents across the country. Sure Start is one of the largest and most expensive of these. First launched in 1998, the programme is described as "the cornerstone" of the Government's drive to tackle child poverty and social exclusion (DCSF, 2008). Local programmes were initially area-based initiatives with a remit to bring together early education, childcare, health and family support for the benefit of young children (under five) and their parents living in disadvantaged areas. However, the programme has expanded in series of waves, and with funding of £1 billion a year the Government aims to have 3,500 Sure Start Centres open, by reaching all children under five and their families in all areas.

## Conclusion

This Chapter has charted the rise of New Labour's ASB agenda, a policy field that was at the heart of New Labour's rebranding as a 'tough on crime' party. It has illustrated that despite successive rounds of legislation and the introduction and modification of an ever-increasing array of tools designed to deal with the issue, the 'problem family' has been a constant, playing a defining role as both the alleged underlying cause of ASB and, largely through inculcating parental



responsibility, the site of solutions. It is the ideological and theoretical assumptions of the broken windows thesis, moral authoritarian communitarianism, underclass theories, developmental criminology, and left realism that have underpinned contemporary ASB policy and practice developments. These perspectives have provided the theoretical tools that allow politicians to suggest that it is parents who possess the primary responsibility for preventing their children committing criminal and anti-social acts through the transmission of acceptable norms of behaviour. It is certain types of families, however, which fail to adequately perform this task and are defined as 'dysfunctional' that perpetuate ASB. These are distinguished from a 'law abiding majority' by their moral deficiency. Their way of living is presented as encompassing 'risk' factors that must be acted on. It is these assumptions that have served to legitimate a system of orders and penalties that place an emphasis on ensuring that "the most challenging" families are called to account for their failings through not only enforcement but allegedly 'supportive' interventions as well, that is the subject of this thesis. Later chapters identify the influence this political climate had on the case study project and the extent to which local strategies of governance converged or diverged from this central vision.

Locating the classificatory labels through which mainly working class families have become the main targets of ASB policy within an historical context serves to draw attention to the way in which erstwhile governmental rationalities may also be informing 'new' ways of working. Indeed, assumptions about the negative impact of poor parenting and 'dysfunctional' home environments have strong historical antecedents such that intensive family support echoes state

interventions into the lives of working class families characteristic of earlier epochs. FIPs, founded on intensive methods of 'support' are the most recent in a line of policy initiatives focused firmly on 'problem families'.

The next chapter looks in more detail at how, when and why intensive family support has been given a central place in the national ASB policy agenda. It reviews evaluative evidence which suggests that supportive methods are positive and beneficial together with critical reflections that points to the more deleterious consequences of intensive family 'support'.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Rise of Intensive Family Support in the Governance of ASB**

#### **Introduction**

First, this chapter looks back at how family support as a technology for tackling ASB first emerged as part of local governance regimes before being appropriated by the Government. Second, it reviews the evidence from mainly government-funded evaluations which suggest that intensive family support is successful in curbing ASB and providing a range of additional benefits for parents and children. It then goes on to consider literature from critical commentators that points to the potentially negative and regressive aspects of family support.

#### **The origins of family support in the governance of ASB**

During New Labour's first term in office and during most of its second, enforcement approaches, justified by an appeal to 'the protection of the community', dominated the ASB agenda. While a tough line remained, it was at the beginning of New Labour's third term that space appeared to be opening up in the Government discourse for recognition that enforcement action alone is not enough for finding sustainable solutions to ASB. Indeed, the Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry into the Government's strategy for combating ASB concluded that the development of "intensive family-based interventions are essential if the deepest-rooted ASB problems are not simply to be recycled from

one area to another" (Home Affairs Select Committee, 2005). There was increasing acknowledgment, therefore, that some families require specialist, intensive and long-term support tailored to their particular needs and intensive family support emerged as Government's key technology for promoting 'sustainable' solutions to the policy problem. This was formally articulated and set down as the Government's policy position in the RAP and the establishment of FIPs. Notwithstanding this, and although it was never a policy priority before 2006, for nearly a decade, intensive family support had been endorsed as 'good practice' on the basis of the perceived successes of a few LAs which had pioneered the approach as a means to dealing with ASB. On the basis of the work of the DFP, the provision of "intensive support" was cited in the key recommendations of the Policy Action Team Eight report on ASB that recommended a three-pronged approach to dealing with ASB: enforcement; prevention and resettlement (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000). Later, the White Paper *Respect and Responsibility - Taking a Stand Against Anti-Social Behaviour* also referred to the DFP as an innovative model of intervention to deal with the underlying causes of disruptive behaviours (Home Office, 2003). The DFP run by the charity NCH (now Action for Children) was held up therein as an example of 'good practice' in helping families remain in their homes, increase school attendance and avoid the need for children to be taken into care (Dillane *et al*, 2001).

Established in 1996, the DFP was the first 'supportive' service in the UK developed specifically to work with alleged perpetrators of ASB and it is this project that provided the inspiration for the subsequent adoption of this model of working amongst local and central governments. The project is run by the



charity Action for Children in partnership with Dundee City Council and works with families who have either been excluded from mainstream housing, or who are placing their current tenancies at risk because of ASB. The project works with families to examine and change the behaviour patterns that cause problems, providing 'intensive support', help and advice alongside referral to appropriate agencies where necessary. An independent evaluation of the DFP (Dillane *et al*, 2001) found that it was successful in producing change in many of the families it worked with, helping them avoid eviction and preventing the need for children to be taken into care (see below).

In 2002/3, a second 'wave' of newer projects (including the one studied in this thesis) were established, all explicitly informed by and built on the perceived 'successes' of the DFP model. These seven projects were located in the north of England and included; five projects developed by Action for Children in partnership with LAs in Blackburn with Darwen, Bolton, Manchester, Oldham and Salford; one project established by Sheffield City Council; and another set up by Shelter in Rochdale. Many of these projects shared key objectives to:

- Prevent repeat cycles of homelessness and family breakdown arising as a result of ASB.
- Address unmet support needs and ensure that families are able to sustain a positive lifestyle without being the cause of ASB.
- Promote social inclusion for families and assist in providing better outcomes in relation to health, education and well being.

- Increase community stability by enabling and supporting families to live peacefully and to fully participate in their communities (Nixon, *et al* 2006a, 2006b).

As knowledge about intensive family support in the governance of ASB began to grow among the policy and practice community during the early-2000s, further projects began to spring up across the UK driven by local agendas and priorities. This included projects set up in Kirklees, Leicester, Bristol and Birmingham. The implementation of intensive family support as a national policy through the establishment of a network of 53 FIPs<sup>8</sup> as part of the Government's RAP in January 2006, had its origins, therefore, in ASB policies set up somewhat independently of the national agenda as part of local governance arrangements and which evaluations had indicated were beneficial in changing families' behaviour<sup>9</sup>:

"We want to build on these successful approaches and roll out these projects in areas where anti-social behaviour is most acute as part of a long-term cross-Government strategy for dealing with problem families" (Respect Task Force, 2006a: 22).

FIPs were set up to reduce ASB perpetrated by families, homelessness and achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes for children and young people, with a specific focus on:

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<sup>8</sup> Of these 34 were effectively set up from scratch and the remaining 19 projects existed prior to 2006 and were not making fundamental changes when they became a FIP

<sup>9</sup> As the policy has evolved, with a greater emphasis placed on the disciplining role of FIPs, the discursive constructs used to describe the projects have changed. Initially they were simply referred to as 'rehabilitation' or 'resettlement' projects, they subsequently became known as "intensive family support projects" and, more recently, have been relabelled "family *intervention* projects" (Parr and Nixon, 2008).

- Improving children's and young people's attendance and behaviour at school, and reducing the level of truancy and exclusion.
- Reducing the prevalence of teenage pregnancy and tackling broader sexual health issues.
- Reducing alcohol, drug and volatile substance misuse of both children and young people and their parents, as well as a focus on other key public health areas, such as obesity and smoking.
- Reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (Respect Taskforce, 2007c: 6).

In Scotland too and again drawing on the DFP model, the Aberdeen Families Project (AFP) was established in 2005, and three 'Breaking the Cycle' (BtC) projects (in Falkirk, Perth and South Lanarkshire) were initiated in 2006/07 and financed through a specific Scottish Government pilot fund running for two years from 2006/07 (Pawson *et al*, 2009). Projects sought to target intensive support on families otherwise liable to eviction for ASB so as to:

- enable families to avoid homelessness
- reduce (rather than simply displace) ASB unresolved by 'conventional remedies'
- reduce reliance on 'punitive' responses to ASB
- avoid the need for children to be taken into care (or enable children to be returned from care)
- create safer, more stable communities.

Since 1996 then, when the first project for was established, intensive family support as a means of addressing the 'root causes' of ASB has increased apace, with rapid expansion in the number of projects available occurring within the last few years in particular: in 2004 when my research commenced there were seven such projects in operation across the UK, there are now 67. The following section looks in more detail at how these projects operate and then reviews the evaluative evidence that has underpinned and driven developments in this policy area.

### **How family support projects work with families**

All family support projects are different and dependent on a range of contextual factors. However, it is possible to point to some factors that are common to most, if not all, projects. Schemes provide a voluntary support service to (usually) families who are homeless or at risk of eviction due to alleged ASB by children, adults, or both. They seek to help families unpick and analyse what needs to change in order for them to improve their situation and desist from engaging in ASB. This often involves project workers trying to understand a complex multi-dimensional set of issues and developing individual 'Support Plans' for each family member. The packages of 'support' provided involve a range of methods of intervention aimed at helping achieve change and vary with regard to each family/member. They may comprise a combination of practical assistance in the home, provision of advice, liaison and advocacy support, sign-posting to other relevant services and organisations, the provision out of school activities, help in managing finances and claiming benefits, personal skills development and parenting skills training. Moreover, according to the Government, projects combine 'intensive support' with 'focused challenge'



defined as a 'twin track approach'. Support and enforcement are said to be 'systematically linked' to provide families with the 'incentive' to change:

“In some communities there are a small number of highly problematic families that account for a disproportionate amount of anti-social behaviour...Family intervention projects work to turn around the behaviour of families and reduce their impact on their community. In so doing, they also bring stability to families' lives, prevent homelessness and improve opportunities for children. They combine intensive support with focused challenge – a twin track approach. For these projects, it is not a question of either/or - support and enforcement are systematically linked to provide families with the incentive to change” (Respect Task Force, 2010)

The projects operate an outreach support service and, for families who are homeless and who need a high level of support, some also provide an additional 'core' residential unit. These comprise a small number of residential flats housed within a project's premises and managed by the project, and provide a 24-hour intensive service. Families living in core accommodation are required to adhere to a set of rules and regulations which vary between projects but which usually comprise of a requirement for children and adults to be in the accommodation at a set time in the evening; restricted access in and out of the project building where the flats are located; visitors by permission only; together with specific rules deemed appropriate for particular families. When living in core accommodation, families are provided with a much more intensive level of intervention involving daily contact with project workers who become involved

with family members' day to day lives. Most are visited each morning to ensure that they are out of bed and that the children are ready for school, and the projects provide several observation visits during the day. Intensive support projects therefore penetrate into traditionally private spheres of conduct and involve high levels of scrutiny and assessment. Moreover, projects with a residential unit involve what can only be described as an institutionalised existence as families are required to live by strict regulations which place extreme restrictions on their liberty.

Although local arrangements vary, family support projects have been designed to work in partnership with a wide range of different statutory and voluntary agencies who either refer families and/or co-work with families alongside the project in a complementary way.

### **What we know about Family Support in the Governance of ASB: the Evaluation Literature**

There is now a considerable body of evidence regarding the perceived efficacy of intensive family support, including evaluations of:

- The Dundee Families Project (Dillane *et al*, 2001).
- Rochdale Shelter Inclusion Project (Jones *et al*, 2006).
- Six intensive family support projects in England (Nixon *et al* 2006b; 2008).
- Family Intervention Projects (White *et al*, 2008).
- Intensive Intervention Schemes in Scotland (Pawson *et al*, 2009).

The five studies all employed both quantitative and qualitative methods, and produced some comparable findings with regard to the characteristics of families referred to the projects, the welfare support needs among those families, the root causes of behaviour, the methods of intervention adopted and the outcomes achieved. These are summarised below:

### ***The reasons families are referred***

Reflecting the all-encompassing definition of ASB, a household might be referred to an intensive family support project for range of different reasons associated with the behaviour of children, parents and/or the family as a whole. It is not uncommon for allegations to involve serious criminal behaviour (in White *et al*'s (2008) study, a third of FIP families included someone who had been arrested in the six months before referral), but a large proportion of cases tended to concern low-level but persistent nuisance behaviours. Nixon *et al* (2006b) found that, typically, cases were portrayed as involving 'noise nuisance', 'petty vandalism', 'shouting abuse at neighbours', and 'arguments over the garden fence.' Across the five studies, behaviour labelled 'youth nuisance', 'excess noise' and 'neighbour disputes' were cited as the three most common reasons for a referral to a project. All studies found, however, that it was common for families to be referred due to a number of different 'types' of ASB and for complaints to have been ongoing for some time. At the point of referral, households are also likely to be subject to a wide variety of actions due to their alleged ASB, including eviction, injunctions and ASBOs. Most households have some form of threat to their tenancy and, often associated with this, the household is at some risk of family breakdown. Studies reported that those referred often claimed that their ASB was being 'exaggerated' by



hostile neighbours and in a significant proportion of cases, they themselves were victim to others' ASB.

### ***Circumstances and needs of families referred for Project support***

Salient family characteristics across all studies relate to poverty and ill-health:

“virtually all the families were poor. Where information was available on family income, this almost always indicated reliance on state benefits’. Furthermore, by far the main target group for the projects would seem to be lone female parents, heading relatively large families, who are ‘white’, poorly or having to respond to the ill health of others” (Dillane *et al.*, 2001: 41).

The empirical evidence on families referred to projects indicates that lone parent women are disproportionately represented. Jones *et al* (2006) evaluating the Shelter Inclusion Project found 60% were lone parents (30 mothers and 2 fathers) while in the study undertaken by Nixon *et al* (2006b) 68% were headed by lone parent women. This mirrored the findings of White *et al* (2008) who found that 69% of families working with FIPs were lone parent women. Similarly, in Pawson *et al*'s study 62% of the households referred to the projects in Scotland were single parent families, of these, 82% were female. In all studies, families referred also tended to be relatively large. Nixon *et al* (2006b) reported that 62% of families had three or more children, while White *et al* (2008) found 56% of families of this size. In Pawson *et al*'s study, the overall average number of children per household was 2.9, compared with the 2005 Scottish average of 1.6. Where the figures are known, families referred also tend to be White British. This was the case with regard to 85% of households in



Nixon *et al*'s (2006b) and 88% in White *et al*'s (2008) study, while only one adult was from a Black or Minority Ethnic group in Jones *et al*'s (2006) evaluation of the Shelter Inclusion Project.

Across all five studies, families referred for intensive support were characterised as having multiple and inter-related support needs which, in many cases, had not been adequately addressed by other agencies. For example, Nixon *et al* (2006b) found that poor mental health or physical health and/or substance abuse affected 80% of adults in referred families. Depression was the single most commonly reported problem, affecting 59% of adults. White *et al* (2008) also reported that 69% of adults working with FIPs experienced depression, with 43% suffering from stress. In Pawson *et al*'s study, virtually all referred families (92%) included a member experiencing one or more disability or health problems. In over a fifth of families, the adult 'head of household' was affected by three or more of these conditions. One tenth of the 121 people in the 35 households included in Jones *et al*'s (2006) study reported a limiting illness or disability. Family violence was also prevalent among the families referred to the projects subject to evaluation with just over half (53%) of women working with the DFP having been in an abusive, violent relationship (Dillane *et al* 2001). Nixon *et al* (2006b) found that just under half of all referred families (47%) contained at least one person subject to intimate partner violence or intergenerational violence (recently or historically). Violence within the home affected about a quarter (24%) of the total caseload in Pawson *et al*'s (2009) study. This could take the form of child on adult violence, as well as abuse of children.

The research evidence from the five studies suggests that children in referred families also have a range of welfare needs with many having school related problems including irregular attendance, exclusions and truancy. In Nixon *et al's* (2006b) evaluation, the most common support need identified among children was learning difficulties, present in 30% of families. The second most common cause for concern amongst children was the high incidence of reported depression, other mental health problems and/or neurological disorders. These conditions affected children in 20% of families. Problems associated with ADHD affected children in 19% of families. Similarly, children in 68% of families in White *et al's* (2008) evaluation had educational and or learning problems and again ADHD was found to be very prevalent with 34% of children reported as having the condition. ADHD was identified as an issue for one or more children in 14% of all families supported by the projects in Pawson *et al's* (2009) study. Nixon *et al* (2006b) also found that project workers assessed the risk of family breakdown as 'high' in over a third of families with a minority of children already on the Child Protection Register at the point of referral. In both White *et al's* (2008) and Nixon *et al's* (2006b) evaluations, further concerns were expressed about the need to take children into care or arrange alternative living arrangements in relation to around one fifth of families. In Pawson *et al's* (2009) study almost two thirds of families were judged by project staff as at moderate or high risk of having a child or children taken into care.

Referred families usually had very low incomes and also frequently had debt problems, commonly rent arrears. At the point of referral, households across all five studies were almost all economically inactive. For instance, in Jones *et al's*

(2006) evaluation only three of the 74 households contained someone in employment (4%), while in Pawson *et al's* study only 3% of service users were in work.

### ***The efficacy of interventions***

The findings on the efficacy of interventions from these independent evaluations were overwhelmingly positive and suggest that family support can be effective in helping families address the 'root causes' of troublesome behaviour. In particular, all five studies found that where families 'engaged' with a project there was likely to be a reduction in ASB and, consequently, the threat of eviction and possible homelessness was also reduced. In Dillane's evaluation of the DFP, almost two-thirds of the total cases (59%) had 'successful' outcomes. Just under one fifth of the cases were deemed to be 'unsuccessful' (18%), the main reasons for which were that the family was perceived to lack commitment or 'did not engage'. The other families either had moved home or came to be viewed as 'inappropriate' referrals (23%).

In Jones *et al's* (2006) study, 32 closed cases (71%) were reported as having positive outcomes with regard to allegations about ASB. Project workers assessed 38 of the 45 closed cases (84%) as being at no risk of homelessness following their contact with the service. Service users interviewed spoke of the considerable benefits of the project and many felt that it had made a significant positive impact on their lives, preventing debt from accumulating, eviction and importantly, helping them feel better able to cope. The authors of the study suggested that while success was not universal, nor was it always complete, the weight of available evidence strongly indicated that the project was more often effective in addressing ASB than not.

In Nixon *et al*'s study (2006b), for 80% of families, complaints about ASB had either ceased or had reduced to a level where the tenancy was no longer deemed to be at risk at the point where the family exited the project. Project workers assessed that in 80% of cases families' tenancies had been successfully stabilised with an associated reduction in the risk of homelessness. The families interviewed as part of the research were particularly appreciative of the ways in which the projects approached them, with a respectful working relationship presented as providing the basis for change. Key aspects of this were: being listened to; not being judged; accessibility and consistency; and honesty. Families had previously had difficult relationships with statutory services and the projects were seen as different from, and more accessible than, formal provision, although this was more about working practices than the status of the organisation. In a follow up study (Nixon *et al*, 2008) on the sustainability of interventions in which the researchers tracked a sample of families who had worked with six intensive family support projects during the period 2003 – 2006, for the majority of families (20/28), positive change was found to have been sustained to the extent that in seven out of ten families, complaints about ASB had largely ceased and, as a result, the family home was secure. The pathway to such successful outcomes varied from one family to another, but commonly focused on improved management of behaviour and/or increased capacity to deal with underlying problems to address social exclusion.

Equally positive outcomes were recorded in Pawson *et al*'s study. 70% of families were reported to have successfully completed their Support Plan at the point they exited the project and among this group of families in 94% of cases



ASB complaints had reduced; for 81% there was a reduced risk of homelessness/eviction; and in 63% of families the risk of family breakdown had been reduced. Furthermore, for every 'health and wellbeing' indicator (e.g. depression, drug misuse, physical health) monitored, the overall balance of change was positive – individuals judged to have seen an improvement in their circumstances exceeded those deemed to be in a worse position when they exited the project.

Similarly, White *et al* (2008) found that while the level of ASB declined considerably among those who 'engaged' with a projects programme of support, a substantial proportion of families (35 per cent) were still engaged in ASB when they completed the intervention (the corresponding figure at the start of the intervention was 92 per cent). However, while 60% of families were subject to one or more housing enforcement action(s) when they started working with a FIP, at the point when they exited the project this had reduced to one fifth (18%). White *et al* (2008) identified a number of features of FIP working practices seen as critical to the model's success. These included the ability of projects to recruit and retain high quality staff; the designation of a dedicated case worker for each family; strict limitation of caseloads to permit intensive work with individual family members, and the embedding of projects within existing multi-agency community safety and welfare partnerships; staying involved for as long as necessary; scope to use resources creatively; and using sanctions alongside support.

Across all the studies, project staff and local services overwhelmingly endorsed the contribution the approach was making to existing services. Despite a

recognition that: the projects can not 'work' for all families; that some families fail to or 'disengage' for various reasons; that contextual factors influence the extent to which projects can be effective; and that the local design and management of individual FIPs means that there will be variation in the extent to which they will bring about positive outcomes, the overriding message is a general view from the evaluative literature that the intensive family support model is a good one that 'works':

"This evaluation has provided positive evidence of the way in which FIPs are operating. There is general consensus that the FIP model is 'fit for purpose' and is required to deal with the families they are targeting. Testament to their perceived success is the way the FIP model is being rolled out to other areas. It is also being used as a blueprint for services with families more broadly classified as 'at risk'" (White *et al*, 2008: 146)

"The research findings suggest that the support provided to families by project workers had been instrumental in helping families achieve positive outcomes, including establishing a secure tenancy, reducing incidents of ASB, preventing family breakdown, and improving levels of health and well-being in families" (Nixon *et al*, 2006b: 132)

"Virtually everyone interviewed in the study – parents, children and young people, representatives of other agencies – praised the work

of the Project, saw it as offering a unique service and wished it to continue" (Dillane *et al*, 2001: 116)

"It can, however, be stated with confidence that the Projects have engaged – and in most cases achieved immediate positive impacts – with some of the country's most vulnerable and troubled families" (Pawson *et al*, 2009: 132).

### **What evaluation research tells us about family support more broadly**

The findings from evaluations of family support interventions reviewed above, which are specifically aimed at addressing problems of ASB, echo those from a broader range of research which fairly consistently points to substantial benefits arising from parenting and family support (Smith, 2006). The growing evidence suggests that supporting parents/families and early intervention leads to a wide range of long term benefits for children including a decreased propensity to be involved in crime and ASB (Cabinet Office, 2008; Smith, 2006; Moran *et al*, 2004). Utting *et al* (2007) for instance examined evidence on what is known about the efficacy of two prominent parenting programmes (*The Incredible Years* and *Triple P*); the *Nurse-Family Partnership* home visiting programme and three programmes for families and carers of high-need adolescents (*Multisystemic Therapy*, *Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care* and *Functional Family Therapy*). They claim that all of these programmes have demonstrated considerable effectiveness in achieving positive outcomes with children and their families in both the short and medium term. They suggest that the six programmes have led to reductions in major risk factors together with exposure to key protective factors, and a number have directly

demonstrated their capacity to reduce re-offending and re-conviction rates for young offenders.

“One immediate conclusion from this review is that the six programmes are supported by considerable evidence of their effectiveness in achieving better outcomes for children and young people; especially those whose early-onset behavioural problems place them at risk for ‘life-course persistent’ criminal involvement, antisocial behaviour and social exclusion” (Utting *et al*, 2007: 80).

The Youth Justice Board’s national evaluation of the Parenting Programme (June 1999 to December 2001) found that, following an intervention, parents made statistically significant improvements in their parenting skills and competencies. According to Ghate and Ramella (2002), by the time parents left their projects, they reported statistically significant positive changes in parenting skills and competencies, including:

- Improved communication with their child.
- Improved supervision and monitoring of young people’s activities.
- Reduction in the frequency of conflict with young people, and better approaches to handling.
- conflict when it arose.
- Better relationships, including more praise and approval of their child, and less criticism and loss of temper.
- Feeling better able to influence young people’s behaviour.
- Feeling better able to cope with parenting in general.



Though some parents had mixed expectations at the outset of what the Programme would be like (and parents on Parenting Orders were especially likely to feel negative), 'exit' ratings at the end of the Programme were positive. Only 6% were negative or indifferent about whether the Programme had been helpful, and over nine in ten would recommend it to other parents in their situation. Perhaps surprisingly, there was no difference in the level of benefit reported by parents who were referred voluntarily as opposed to being referred via a Parenting Order. Parents were especially positive about the qualities and skills of the project staff. Although wary of making any claims about the impact of parenting programmes in the longer term, Ghate and Ramella conclude:

"Although short-term programmes aimed at parents may be thought unlikely to have much immediate impact on young people's behaviour, there were some encouraging signs for young people associated with the Parenting Programme. These included mild improvements in young people's perceptions of the parent-child relationship, and drops in official re-conviction rates. There were also some reasons to think the Programme might have a 'preventive' effect for later generations of children" (Ghate and Ramella, 2002: vi).

Moran *et al* (2004) conducted a review of the international evidence regarding the effectiveness of parenting support programmes on behalf of the then Department for Education and Skills. They also point to a relatively extensive body of evidence attesting to the effectiveness of interventions for parents

which suggest that boosting specific parenting skills is strongly associated with good outcomes for both parents and for children and young people. They identified a number of programmes for parents of pre-school and school-age children that are effective in preventing and treating ASB, although they stress current understanding of why such programmes are effective (such as the independent and additive effects of the individual components) is still in its infancy. Notwithstanding the important caveats they highlight, they claim that it is possible to identify numerous examples of services that have delivered positive outcomes for both parents and for children and young people.

Although there is not the space to discuss all of them in detail here, the authors of family support evaluation studies and reviews have raised pertinent questions about key elements of a programme's efficacy. They acknowledge that aspects of effectiveness vary between programmes and point to broader short-comings associated with family support such as the need to focus attention not only the 'what works' at the micro level in parenting support programmes but also on macro policy that effectively addresses social inequalities in the broader context of parents' lives (Moran *et al*, 2004). Furthermore, Moran *et al* (2004) highlight how the strong statements made by central government about 'reinforcing parental responsibilities', enforced by measures such as Parenting Orders, often sit uneasily with the supportive ethos of services on the ground. Notwithstanding this, the main thrust of the evaluative literature on family support and parenting programmes is that they 'work'. This has lead to a strong sentiment of support for parenting and family interventions being conveyed to practitioners and policy makers:

"...the strong policy message from the literature shows that most parents welcome support, and stressed parents especially welcome it. Although even the best designed services typically experience some level of drop-out and show that some proportion of the sample do not benefit, this should not discourage the provision of services for the remainder of families, who can and do benefit" (Moran *et al*, 2004: 127).

These reviews and the evidence on which they draw have been influential in informing the development of family support aimed at reducing the likelihood of 'poor outcomes' and achieving long lasting benefits in terms of, among other things, crime and ASB.

### **...but is family support really a good thing?**

Despite ostensibly favourable evaluative evidence, the family-centred developments discussed above have not been beyond criticism and this section focuses on the largely theoretical reflective critiques of New Labour's family support agenda with particular reference to those aimed at the prevention of crime and disorder. Critical commentators have drawn attention to ideologies that inform the policies and have posed questions regarding whether parenting education and family support is really such an unqualified good thing, considering the *why* of family support, the rationale behind New Labour policy developments in this area and, with that, the goals that parenting and family support activities are being mobilised in support of (Featherstone, 2006; Smith, 2006). These critiques may be summarised as coalescing around five key (overlapping) themes: family support as moral regulation; family support as the

micromanagement of daily life; family support as criminalising and stigmatising; and, family support as a form of contractual governance.

### ***Family support as moral regulation***

New Labour's family policy field is complex and inconsistent. It combines care and control, universalism and selectivism and has multiple, diverse aims which includes child protection, promoting social cohesion, maintaining public order, combating social exclusion, and building economic and social capital (Gillies, 2005a; Lister, 2006; Spratt, 2009). Notwithstanding this and despite the differences between and within different policy domains, commentators point to a gradual erosion of the boundaries between strategies targeted at 'anti-social' families and those aimed at improving the conditions of all families (Rodger, 2008). It is claimed that both the more 'supportive' and 'punitive' forms of interventions into family life are representative of a mode of governance grounded in moral responsibility aimed at ensuring families become self-reliant, meet their obligations and take greater accountability for social and economic ills (Goldson and Jamieson, 2002; Gillies, 2005a).

Lister (2006) and Featherstone (2006) locate New Labour's family support policies as part of a broader project of welfare reform. Marking a break with the assumptions underpinning the welfare state, this shift, it is argued, has seen family support recast as part of a much broader project to establish a 'social investment' (Giddens, 1998), as opposed to a 'welfare', state wherein investment in human capital rather than the provision of direct economic support is central. This chimes with what Levitas (1998) calls a 'social integrationist' understanding of social inclusion which identifies individual



opportunity in the labour market as the means for achieving inclusion, as well as a moral underclass discourse emphasising the cultural pathology of the poor.

At the heart of the 'social investment state' is a 'future-orientation' (Lister, 2006) in which, for state spending to be viewed as worthwhile, it must not simply be consumed in the present, but must have a future pay-off in terms of promoting labour market participation and individual employment opportunity, or, more negatively, to prevent disproportionate demand on the future share of service provision. As such, in social investment-type family support projects (Sure Start is a classic example) an explicit emphasis is placed on encouraging parents to become part of the 'hard-working' majority by finding paid employment (Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, investing in children's well-being and education (as citizen-workers of the future) is seen as crucial as the benefits of investment are repaid over an extended time in economic productivity and reduced costs to society through decreased demands on services, including health, social security and criminal justice (Spratt, 2009). Achieving desired outcomes in children has necessitated intervention in the family as a whole and working with those on whom children are primarily dependent – their parents, particularly their mothers. This entails ethical self-management within the moral parameters of normative definitions of 'successful parenting' (Gillies, 2005a). Within this model, because certain groups are restricted in their ability to utilise economic and social opportunities, New Labour policy has concentrated a high proportion of investments on socially excluded populations. These range from general support for all parents with children (through changes in the tax and benefits system) to specific and targeted help for poorer families. The Sure Start programme, for instance, is designed to offer extra help to children prior to them

starting school, while the Children's Fund is targeted at specific initiatives to help children in the five-to-thirteen age range, while Connexions helps with the transition from education to work (Clarke, 2006; Spratt, 2009). In this context, investment in families is accompanied by the regulation and coercion of children and their parents: family support is used to 'encourage' the responsibility of parents, but if necessary enforcement (in the guise of Parenting Orders for instance) is employed 'to bring up children as competent, responsible citizens' (Blair, 1998: 12. In Levitas, 2006: 320).

While "support" has traditionally implied direct help in the form of material benefits (for example, child or income support), Gillies (2005b) suggests that New Labour's use of the term is short-hand for parenting classes. For Gillies (2005a., 2005b) this amounts to a top-down, authoritarian programme of 're-training' driven by a particular moral agenda aimed at regulating those families who are unable or unwilling to conform to the moral values of the mainstream. In this process, families needs become equated with personal deficiencies in their attitudes and ways of thinking (Gray, 2009a). Such 'supportive' interventions she claims merely seek to encourage parents to become sufficiently skilled in the 'job' of parenting. Tacit moral judgements direct what, for Gillies, amounts to an authoritarian and harsh measure which forces parents to fulfil their responsibilities by conforming to normative definitions of successful, competent parenting. Echoing these claims Lister (2006: 326) suggests that:

"Great emphasis is placed on parenting and the responsibilities of parents. Although this has been backed up with some support services...there is also a strong whiff of authoritarianism in the

measures adopted to ensure that parents (typically mothers) turn their children into responsible citizens”

With specific regard to FIPs, Parr and Nixon (2008) highlight how the political discourse which frames the intervention defines families through a normative framework which constructs them as morally deficient and denotes certain desirable subjectivities that FIPs should aim to cultivate. They suggest that FIPs seek to transform the ‘anti-social’ subject into active self-governing, responsibilised citizens in accordance with the stated norms attributed to the wider community. Holt (2008) similarly suggests that Parenting Orders, and the programmes associated with them, are disciplinary in nature focused on educating parents how to discipline both themselves and their family members according to standardised norms of child-rearing. These practices serve to normalise and regulate parents own subjectivities by constituting reality in certain ways. Resistance to such interventions, she suggests, is difficult in a context within which parenting discourses are all-pervasive. Holt draws attention to the dramatic increase in parenting discourses in the media (for example, reality TV, self-help books, internet forums) such that parenting literature which appears to bypass experts is all the more subtle in its normalising effects. Thus, she points to the ‘dispersed nature’ of parenting regulation whereby parents are regulated in a number of sites, both formally and judicially, as in the case of Parenting Orders, or informally and commercially, through media and publications. Linked to this, she also claims that the distinction between regulating ‘deviance’ and ‘everyday’ practices is disappearing, making the “hegemony of parenting discourse ever more difficult



to resist as *all* parents are increasingly co-opted as mutual agents of scrutiny" (Holt, 2008: 212).

***Family support: micro-managing the daily life of working class mothers***

Many family and parenting support programmes direct attention on the 'proximal' causes of poor parenting as the focus of intervention. A number of critics argue, however, that micro-level parenting interventions which focus on specific individual behaviours of parents at the expense of the material context and social structures as the principle problem to be addressed, is deeply problematic (Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1994; Goldson and Jamieson, 2002). Viewing 'poor outcomes' (such as ASB) as cultural phenomena to be addressed by changing the norms of parenting in poor families (e.g. reading books, structured play, cleaner homes, attendance at nursery and maternal employment), easily results in blame falling on mothers, usually working class mothers. In part, it is suggested that this reflects the fact that the psychological and psychiatric measures which enable the competence of parents to be established were developed by privileged, white, middle class professionals and were founded on research with white, middle-class, heterosexual mothers. As such, the form and content of family support services tend to reflect prevailing middle class values and ambitions around parenting which, in turn, has helped to construct and maintain a dominant ideology of motherhood. This leads to Black and working class styles of child-rearing being pathologised as 'insensitive' (Holt, 2008) and has also ensured that working class families are often the target of intervention (Gillies, 2005a, 2005b; Clarke, 2006). Clarke (2006) suggests that poor mothers whose behaviour, attitudes and lifestyle do not conform to these norms are easily construed as exhibiting pathological behaviour resulting from a combination of ignorance and moral deviance.



Family support policies therefore bear most heavily on poor parents who are already dealing with the pressures of poverty and poor environments and do not have access to economic, social, cultural and emotional 'parenting resources' (Ghate and Hazel, 2002; Gillies, 2005b; Nixon and Hunter, 2009). As such, Gillies suggests that class remains implicit in normative definitions of parenting practice but a notion of class as 'gradients of personal development':

"The notion that parenting practice can be separated out from socio-economic status and then used to explain the inequality it is necessarily grounded in, highlights a very particular understanding of class in terms of gradients of personal development. Structural and other constraints on action are dismissed in this model of the agentic, reflective self, with appropriately raised citizens assumed to be able to negotiate and transcend the obstacles in their path by exploiting opportunities, developing skills and managing risk" (Gillies, 2005b: 840).

This is not to say that poor parenting skills are not recognised as contributing to and being associated with offending behaviour. It has also long been acknowledged that delinquency is found in damaged and damaging families, and it is accepted that family problems may propel young people into deviance and juvenile offending. Notwithstanding this, many have made clear that such a contention should not automatically lead to blaming parents in a reductionist and oversimplified manner since the relationship between parenting and offending behaviour is complex (Arthur, 2005; Squires and Stephen, 2005). For instance, it is widely acknowledged that the stress caused by economic

hardship has a devastating effect on families and diminishes parents' capacity to provide supportive and consistent parenting. As Burney and Gelsthorpe (2008) explain, bringing up children in poor circumstances makes it hard to operate as a perfect parent, and lone parents without earnings are at the bottom of the ever-widening income scale. Yet, an emphasis on parental and individualised responsibility masks these wider structural causes of ASB which are instead explained as signs of moral decay and anti-authority attitudes rather than e.g. alienation, the decline of physical surroundings, unemployment, or depression (Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1994). As such, it is argued that interventions framed at the level of the individual and family merely seek to change parenting processes in poor families to counter poor social and physical environments. Clarke (2006) suggests that the Sure Start programme is one such family intervention that epitomises a social investment approach to social policy but that risks:

"...a narrowing of perspective to the benefits in terms of the return on the state's investment, and losing sight of the inherent benefits of, and social justice arguments for, provision of services for children and support for families" (Clarke, 2006: 702).

### ***Family support: punitive, stigmatising, criminalising***

It has also been argued that the current preoccupation with 'the family' and parenting within contemporary policy has assumed a distinctively punitive edge such that the tone of legislation is now dominated by the state's willingness to 'insist and punish, rather than advise and ameliorate' (Drakeford and McCarthy, 2000: 96). Critics argue that New Labour's legislative interventions have redrawn the lines between parenting and the state and necessitated a shift in

the willingness of the state not only to intervene in the intimate relations between parents and children and define aspects of parental responsibility, but provide for their legal enforcement as well, in part, through the ASB agenda (Drakeford and McCarthy, 2000; Prior and Paris, 2005; Holt, 2008). Indeed, the coercive element of issuing a court order to force parents to change their parenting practices or indeed engage with support or face eviction from social housing is somewhat new (Holt, 2008). Referring mainly to family support and parenting programmes in the youth justice policy arena, Jamieson (2005) and Goldson and Jamieson (2002) suggest that the intervention of the state in the form of a correctional process underpinned by stigmatisation and negative labelling, is ultimately targeted at 'failure'. They argue that family/parenting interventions effectively 'force' parents to account for the behaviour of their children, punishing them for being a 'bad parent,' and casting them as failures. Holt (2008) suggests, for instance, that parenting guidance programmes, which those subject to Parenting Orders are required to attend, serve a 'normalising' function with parents required to examine their parenting practices within a discourse of 'bad parenting.' This critical literature maintains that the delivery of 'supportive' interventions within a crime and disorder framework founded on such stigmatising and pathologising notions of 'problem' families is likely to be alienating and counter productive for those on the receiving end evoking feelings of stress, alienation and penalisation (Drakeford and McCarthy, 2000; Goldson and Jamieson, 2002; Arthur, 2005; Gillies, 2005). It is claimed that this is not only ethically problematic but it calls into question the very integrity of the intervention itself as they potentially violate established legal principles such as 'due process', 'burden of proof' and 'reasonable doubt' (Goldson and Jamieson, 2002; Jamieson, 2005). Moreover, statutory parenting interventions (e.g.



Parenting Orders) that are relatively short in duration and which come at a comparatively late stage in young people's lives, Arthur (2005) argues, is unlikely to offer a quick fix for the complex circumstances that might give rise to criminal or 'anti-social' behaviour but instead such "authoritarian" measures are likely to compound and intensify damaging outcomes for the families, not least by labelling them as 'failures'.

Rodger (2008: 118) suggests that the 'family sin bin'<sup>10</sup> "seems to be an example of the growing closeness of family and criminal justice policy". The apparent benign-welfarism of family support projects designed to address the 'root causes' of ASB (like the one under study in this thesis) is said to hide a growing punitive authoritarianism. Likewise, Garrett (2007., 2006) warns us that FIPs bear similarities to 20th century versions of experimental, eugenicist institutes and camps for social engineering operating in Nazi Germany and the Netherlands that sought to re-educate and rehabilitate a-social families. For Garret FIPs: "hark back to the 'remoralisation' of the working classes, urban poor and 'industrial residuum' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (2006: 7) and, particularly those with residential units, are said to provide "a new disciplinary mechanism *beyond* due process and law" (Garrett, 2007: 221). Indeed, in a scathing critique of two of the main research reports that have been undertaken evaluating intensive family support projects (Dillane *et al.*, 2001; Nixon *et al.*, 2006b), Garrett claims to: "...bring the 'undiscussed' into discussion and to focus on what can be interpreted as ambiguous, unconvincing, unfinished, omitted and insufficiently stressed facets within these research publications (Garrett, 2007: 204-5). Garrett suggests that the research

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<sup>10</sup> A pejorative term used mainly in the tabloid press to refer to Family Intervention Projects (Parr and Nixon, 2008).



teams should have been bolder in critically interpreting their findings. He draws particular attention to an absence of discussion on how such projects "confuse, coerce and infantilize residents", particularly those living within the 'core' or residential settings, where he suggests much of the emphasis is on surveillance and containment and where there must also be a danger that any attempts to provide 'care' will become corrupted. Moreover, such research, Garrett claims, acts as generators of legitimacy for the extraordinary and retrogressive. In his critique, Rodger also calls into question the apparently 'voluntary' nature of engagement on the grounds that it masks an inherent coercive element whereby the alternative to participation is loss of home:

"Under the guise of social welfare support, many marginal and fairly dysfunctional families were effectively threatened into the schemes and into the intensive supervision of their lives through the restrictions imposed on their movements and autonomy while they lived in the core accommodation...it is precisely the combination of family support and civil law threat that creates an uneasy relationship between social policy and criminal justice. The dominant mode of thinking here is operant conditioning: the appropriate value orientations must be inculcated in the family before they can be released back into 'normal' society" (Rodger, 2008: 122).

As alluded to in the quote above, while family support has been identified by Lister and Gillies as co-joining social and economic goals within a 'fiscalised' social policy (Spratt, 2009), family support policies have also been conceived of

as part of a 'criminalised' social policy whereby the boundaries between social policy and criminal justice become blurred. This means that diverse areas of social policy such as housing, education, health provision, urban policy and planning, which had previously been largely sheltered from them became suffused with agendas directed at addressing concerns about crime, security, social regulation and the containment of disorder (Crawford, 2006; Helms *et al*, 2007; Holt, 2008; Rodger, 2008). This convergence has occurred around and been rationalised by ideologies of 'risk', prevention and early intervention. Gilling calls this a 'preventionist consensus' (Gilling, 1997) such that ASB legislation marks a subtle change in the role of the welfare state whereby the notion of risk has replaced that of the alleviation of need and social inequality as a founding principle in welfare support. It has been argued that the welfarist values of social policy - a principle that the welfare state meets needs regardless of issues of deserts - interventions become buried under the objectives of crime prevention, a 'punishing welfare state' (Gilling and Barton, 1997; Pollack, 2008; Rodger, 2008). Indeed, eligibility for support rests on prior criminalisation:

"...when it is suggested that social policy is being criminalised there is an assumption that there is an ongoing process of redefinition of the aims of purposes of the welfare state: an abandonment of concern for the alleviation of poverty, disadvantage and the meeting of human need as ends in themselves in favour of focusing policy on criminality and criminals in order to maintain a disciplined and ordered society. Increasingly, social policies are forced to address implicitly what historically was left implicit: the thrust of social welfare

is to provide care and social support but only on the condition that citizens lead orderly lives” (Rodger, 2008: 6).

For Gilling and Barton this shift might have offered promising prospects for welfarism. They suggest that by pointing to social pathologies such as poor parenting, “there was always the risk that such factors could be used as part of an alternative political agenda by local authorities seeking a launching pad for a push towards increasing broader-based social policy interventions” (1997: 21). In fact, Gilling and Barton argue that where welfarist measures form part of a package which contains alternative agendas, a welfarist velvet glove has often masked a more punitive iron fist of crime prevention policy. As Muncie and Hughes (2002) suggest, the fact that project workers might get to know the family very well and develop high levels of trust does not necessarily serve to counter criticism that it is a penetrating technique of surveillance governed by assumptions about the ‘normal orderly family’. Moreover, non-criminogenic welfare needs - those not linked to offending behaviour - are viewed as no longer meriting attention (Robinson, 2008). This reflects the view that, while social policy has always had a role to play in tackling incivility and criminality, its methods are distinct from those of the crime control policies which typically respond to deviance in a more immediate and punitive way (Rodger, 2008). Thus, help is not sought but given, because someone decides it is needed in order to prevent crime and disorder (McCarthy and Walker, 2006).

### ***Family support as contractual governance***

Adam Crawford (2003., 2006) has drawn attention to the rise of contractual governance whereby the contemporary social regulation of behaviour, including the governance of crime and incivility, operates through a maze of contracts.



Such contracts are largely behavioural in character in that they seek to govern individual conduct and secure a defined sense of order. In turn, they have a deeply moral dimension, embodying a conception of agency, order and active responsibility. Contractual governance is also concerned with the distribution of responsibilities and obligations and places responsibility on people and/or organizations to comply with their own volunteered agreements. Indeed, contracts presuppose participation in contractual deliberations to be voluntary and assume parties as self-maximizing, rational-choice actors with the capacity for self-reform/determination (MacKenzie, 2008). This is intended to engender a sense of ownership, encouraging an active rather than passive responsibility for the self-regulating and self-policing of individual conduct. As such, they work to 'responsibilise' parties and encourage self-regulation and entail a degree of reciprocity or mutuality such that the active responsibilisation they promote is not one-way. Crawford suggests that

"Contracts are the social equivalents of crime prevention through environmental design. They seek to 'design out crime' through a complex array of instruments that inscribe incentives and disincentives into the physical environment and social relations" (Crawford, 2003: 500).

Contracts are particularly prevalent in relation to families and parenting (Crawford, 2003), and family support projects may be seen as emblematic of this new form of contractual governance. Indeed, welfare support is provided on the condition that families engage with a package of support, desist from ASB and observe responsibilities, a contract that families 'voluntary' partake in.



In many family support projects, a key initial task for project workers is encouraging the tenant to agree and sign up to a 'contract' in the form of a Support Plan setting out a programme of work to address their ASB, with specific objectives and targets set out over a specified time period. This contract represents the core technology utilized by the project (Prior, 2007). The risk of homelessness plays a central role. Families are deemed eligible for referral if their social housing tenancy is at risk. In turn, the households ability to maintain their tenancy is cited as a key criteria for 'success' and likewise the loss of home remains a powerful sanction against households who fail to engage. Thus, if the family/or members of the family refuse to agree to a contract, then they are deemed to have failed to engage and are referred back to the social landlord with the presumption that eviction or other legal consequences will proceed (Flint, 2009). However, as MacKenzie points out, contractual governance assumes a capacity for self-determination and with that control, self-mastery and an intimate knowledge of technologies of reform. This is a 'positive freedom' in contrast to a 'negative freedom':

"Contractual governance tends to ignore the question of negative freedom, and takes the view that what is needed for individuals to exercise positive freedom (in the right direction!) is a contractual threat of penal sanction which hovers over them in something of the manner of a corporate floating charge. This seems, at best, a highly optimistic approach to the regulation of behaviour" (Mackenzie, 2008: 217).

As Mackenzie suggests, there is little evidence that contracts promote or cause 'pro-social' or 'acceptable' technologies of the self. Mackenzie suggests, therefore, that contracts are a post-welfare example of "political wishful thinking." This echoes David Prior's (2007) findings following an evaluation of an intensive family support project for households accused of ASB which suggested that, in some cases, the challenge for a family support project, even in partnership with a range of other agencies, is immense in its bid to identify and negate existing, deeply entrenched sources of socially destructive power and replace them with positive, personally and socially constructive sources:

"...the technology of the contract typically required a level of discipline and organization on the part of tenants and family members that was precisely what these individuals and families evidently lacked. For many, it seemed that the requirement to keep appointments with project staff – even to be able to remember that an appointment had been made – was too far outside of their everyday frame of reference, their 'habitus', to be achievable. Acquiring basic skills of parenting or the techniques of anger management, and having both the courage and determination to try using them, was for many an even more remote possibility" (Prior, 2007: 13)

## **Conclusion**

Intensive family support represents a logical continuation of New Labour's ASB policy and rhetoric (reviewed in Chapter Two) which has consistently presented

the problem family as the being a key causal influence in children's ASB. The Government's commitment to this approach has been based on a number of evaluative studies (most of which have been funded by the Government) which suggest that intensive family support not only 'works' to reduce incidents of ASB, but also goes some way to tackling the 'root causes' of this behaviour and is welcomed by those families who are on the receiving end. The perceived benefits of this type of intervention have been supported by the findings from a range of evaluative studies outside of the field of ASB.

Notwithstanding this, the 'supportive' nature of these projects has been called into question and is the subject of academic debate. There seems to be some agreement among critics from a range of perspectives that family support is largely about inculcating parental responsibilities in order that children are constructed as disciplined and self-responsible subjects. Beyond this, critiques of intensive family support have conceptualised such projects negatively as authoritarian programmes of re-training targeting the most vulnerable (Gillies, 2005), as punitive and stigmatising technologies (Garrett, 2007) that are illustrative of a social investment state (Featherstone, 2006) a creeping criminalisation of social policy (Rodger, 2008), and as instances of contractual governance (Crawford, 2003). It is also claimed that both the more 'supportive' and explicitly punitive interventions into family life, are representative of a mode of governance grounded in moral responsibility and aimed at ensuring families become self-reliant, meet their obligations and take greater accountability for social and economic ills. In turn, it is argued that family 'support' interventions assume a capacity for self-determination and ignore the material and structural contexts that shape families' lives.

These polarised positions seem to suggest that intensive family support is either an unqualified 'good' thing or is resolutely 'bad'. It prompts reflection on the way in which intensive family support is concerned with the management or regulation of 'problem' families rather than just the provision of benefits and services (as some of the evaluative literature seems to suggest). This raises a number of important questions for this thesis about whether family support is a legitimate recognition of the multiple 'root causes' of ASB and heralds a new, holistic and multidisciplinary approach to the control of conduct, or whether it is something more sinister that we should be wary of, more akin to punishment. Furthermore, the literature reviewed in this chapter also points to process and practices of governing ASB more generally and, with that, to the exercise of power, control and authority. They suggest, for instance, that the ASB agenda is linked to wider (neoliberal) governing processes, they refer to the ways in which (ASB) policy problem and solutions are constructed, and they make claims about the role of the state and non-state actors. It is with these latter concerns that the next chapter is focused.



## **Chapter Four**

### **Constructing a theoretical framework**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter Three provided an overview of claims regarding the benefits of family support, generally, and, specifically, in relation to ASB that have informed Government policy. It also discussed literature that draws attention to a range of factors which suggest that, rather than positive and beneficial, intensive family support is regressive and potentially harmful. These latter perspectives are necessarily anchored (even if not explicitly) in wider theories about how power and control are exercised and with what purpose. Thus, while these critical perspectives serve as an important stepping stone in constructing a conceptual scaffold for the thesis, in and of themselves, they do not represent a coherent theoretical framework. This Chapter, therefore, situates this critical literature within bodies of work which help explicate further the dynamic processes involved in the governance of conduct. This includes an exploration of the way in which the ASB agenda is linked to wider (neoliberal) governing processes, the way in which (ASB) policy problems and solutions are instantiated, and the role of the state and non-state actors.

The chapter begins by looking at post-Foucauldian governmentality perspectives, arguably the most influential body of thinking around the ASB policy field. Work inspired by this approach draws attention to the discourses that drive policy and, in turn, the way in which ASB is problematised and the

subject of policy defined. Second, political economic accounts are considered. From this perspective, authors attribute the rise of control measures to the ascendance of a neoliberal global capitalism with the accompanying reconfiguration of political power drawing attention to the role of the state and economy. These two frameworks were chosen since critical analyses of new modes of governing (dis)order have frequently been situated within one or the other and they inform directly or complement the critical accounts reviewed in the previous chapter (Stenson and Edwards, 2001; Beckett and Herbert, 2008). Section three then sets out how these approaches can be developed and challenged within a theoretical framework broadly defined as a “realist criminology” (Hughes, 2007). It is suggested that all of these perspectives provide some useful conceptual and theoretical resources with which an understanding of the conditions of existence, together with both the intended and unintended effects of the intensive family support project under study here can be located.

### **The governmentality thesis**

There is a diverse body of post-Foucauldian influenced work relating to crime and disorder, the most influential of which has developed around the concept of ‘governmentality’. In the late 1970s Michel Foucault gave a series of lectures at the College de France in which his concern with power was directed towards ‘government’ (Foucault, 1991). While an interest in the ‘normalising’ practices of social institutions had long been central to his work, the lectures marked the emergence of a more explicitly ‘political’ frame of reference. Governmentality studies which have developed this work seek to understand the way individuals are governed and govern themselves. They are concerned with the *how* of

governing, how power and knowledge are exercised. Dean calls this perspective an 'analytics of government': "An *analytics* is a type of study concerned with an analysis of the specific conditions under which particular entities emerge, exist and change" (1999: 20).

The term 'governmentality' acts both as a micro-level conceptualisation capturing the rationale of ruling and its techniques, and serves as a macro-level framework for analysing how societies are governed (Dean, 1999). It offers, therefore, both a general theory of government and substantive/descriptive theories of particular programmes of rule and associated objects (Frauley, 2007). With regard to the latter, many have conceived of the term 'governmentality' as being based on the semantic merger of Foucault's notion of 'government' with 'mentality' or 'modes of thought' (Dean, 1999; Lemke, 2001). In this way, 'governmentality' is firstly concerned with how we *think* about governing. For Dean, this is not about individual consciousness but a collective activity that is relatively taken for granted and derived from particular theories, ideas, philosophies and forms of knowledge. Studies of governmentality are concerned with how these rationalities/mentalities of government operate within our organised ways of doing things, our 'regimes of practices', such as punishing (Dean, 1999). The discursive aspect of this is important in the acknowledgment that, before power can be exercised, its objects need to be defined and boundaries established. This occurs through the delineation of concepts, the specification of objects, the provision of arguments and justifications etc (Lemke, 2001). A key part of this involves the '*problematization*' of certain conduct and populations. Governmentality is, in part, therefore, concerned with forms of *representation* which mark out

discursively the field within which 'problems' are made 'thinkable' (Rose, 1990). In turn, the governmental 'problem' and the techniques or interventions to tackle it are inseparable; it is not possible to study the *technologies* of government - "strategies, techniques and procedures through which different authorities seek to enact programmes of government in relation to the materials and forces to hand and the resistances and oppositions anticipated or encountered" (Rose, 1996: 43) - without an analysis of the governmental *rationalities* underpinning them, and which allow us to govern and be governed. This conceptualisation of the term also points to the way in which Foucault uses the term 'government'. The latter is used by Foucault to refer to the 'conduct of conduct', to any act concerned with the regulation of conduct or the calculated means of directing human conduct. It draws attention to the means through which populations are governed by others, accept being governed and also govern themselves. In this usage then, 'government' does not possess just a political meaning referring to 'the state', governmental bodies or organisations or to the direct exercise of power by them, but rather emphasises how power is exercised in order to shape aspects of behaviour or conduct by a range of agencies. In this sense, 'government' goes beyond political forms of power and occurs on a continuum which extends from self-regulation or 'technologies of the self' to 'governing others' through more political, formal government (Garland, 1997; Dean, 1999; Lemke, 2001).

At the macro level, 'governmentality' also refers to the emergence of a distinctly new form of thinking about and exercising power that came to predominate over other types of power in Western Europe between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries (Dean, 1999; Garland, 1997). A specific modern form of power and



rule, governmentality describes a new form of governing that arose, and was closely allied with, the creation and growth of modern society's ability to employ more sophisticated methods of discipline and regulation, utilising new technologies of observation, statistical analysis and administration oriented to the welfare and productive efficiency of populations. Within processes of governmentality, expertise, with its grounding in (scientific) authority plays a key mediating role, operating not through oppressive intervention but through relationships with self-regulating individuals that are founded on a logic of choice and personal desire for self-development, guided by authoritative expertise (Rose, 1990., 1996). Donzelot (1979), for instance, has examined how the discourses of the medical and teaching professions impacted on the family and incited (though not through coercion) working class families to adjust their behaviours towards an ideal image of family life.

This meaning of 'governmentality' is, therefore, a historically specific version of the first (Dean, 1999). Furthermore, neoliberalism is identified as representing an advanced form of governmentality that entails ever more complex ways of dealing with the problems that confront society in which the new subject of government is construed as client, customer and consumer but also as a responsible actor who is an active, autonomous and rational agent (Foucault 1991; Rose, 1999). Rose (2000), refers to this as the rise of 'ethopolitics' which is aimed at regenerating and reactivating the ethical values that are believed to regulate individual conduct and that help maintain order by binding individuals into shared moral norms and values. Rose suggests that while these complexities can be identified in most historical contexts, they have become particularly pertinent within contemporary programmes, strategies and

techniques of conduct: forms of government that Rose refers to as 'advanced' liberal. In this context, changes to the reconfiguration of welfare have emphasised self-reflexivity and individualisation and, relatedly, a rise in the 'psychological' dimension of welfare such that it has been 'responsibilised' (Stenner and Taylor, 2008):

"Responsibilisation here takes a characteristic form. Within this new politics of conduct, the problems of problematic persons are reformulated as moral or ethical problems, that is to say, problems in the ways in which such persons understand and conduct themselves and their existence. This ethical reformulation opens the possibility for a whole range of psychological techniques to be recycled in programmes for governing 'the excluded' (Rose, 2000: 334).

The rhetoric of 'empowerment' is significant in processes of responsibilisation and directed towards those who are the most socially excluded. Premised upon notions of an independent, self-sufficient and entrepreneurial citizenship, empowerment strategies focus upon reworking the subjectivity of those who find themselves entangled within the state apparatus. The purported advantage of this rhetoric is that interventions appear to reject the logic of patronising dependency that were said to characterise earlier welfare modes of expertise. Rather, social exclusion is reconfigured to be 'a state of mind' amendable to cognitive restructuring and empowerment (Pollack, 2008). Empowerment, and the related notions of self-esteem and confidence, are founded on notions that those who are excluded recognise their own complicity in their exclusion and make themselves free to achieve inclusion in a moral community.

Consequently, empowerment takes on an individualistic meaning, in turn, rendering structural factors irrelevant. As Rose (2000) claims, empowerment "codes the subjective substrate of exclusion as lack of self-esteem, self-worth, and the skills of self-management necessary to steer oneself as an active individual in the empire of choice" (Rose, 2000: 334).

In both of its formulations, governmentality works to redirect attention away from the actions of representatives of capital and the state towards the localised settings in which power is actually exercised. So while the state is a nodal point from which certain projects of government may emerge, power does not flow from centres but instead is produced through the play of forces in local settings. Governmentality is not a rejection of sovereignty however. The concept is based on a conceptual triangle of sovereignty, discipline and government, and it is an attempt to understand the operation of power within and outwith sovereignty and law. In this formulation, power is appropriated by macro powers such as the state but the theory reverses the traditional understanding that power is top-down. Methods of exercising power are not invented by ruling groups, rather, they utilise what already exists, appropriating them for their own purposes (Joseph, 2004). A key place is attributed to the formation and direction of the beliefs and ideas of populations, whereby those who wish to govern must harness the freedoms and autonomies of individuals and guide their actions towards policy goals.

Governmentality points to the historical contingency in the 'problems' that need to be governed and the authorities involved in clear, systematic and explicit or 'rationalised' attempts to do so. There is no single 'governmentality paradigm',

however, and Foucault's conceptual tools have been employed in different ways. Dean (1999), O'Malley (1996), Stenson (1999), Garland (1997) and Rose (2000) (among others) have all presented ways in which the governmentality thesis might be useful for enriching our understanding of the field of crime control. Commentators have also drawn on the language of governmentality to both deepen our understanding of ASB policies together with their techniques and rationalities (at the micro-level), and to place these policies within the wider context of emerging forms of governance characteristic of advanced liberal democracies.

John Flint (2002., 2004., 2006) has been at the forefront of theorising the governance of ASB using the governmentality framework to examine the way in which social housing seeks to direct the conduct of tenants through ASB policies. Drawing on Rose's notions of a new 'politics of conduct' and 'technologies of self', he identifies how housing agencies seek to direct the conduct of tenants in two key ways with regard to self-regulation. First, he suggests that social housing agencies govern conduct through explicit disciplinary power over those who do not conform to 'commonly accepted' norms of self-conduct through the use of reactive and punitive technologies (e.g. eviction and ASBOs). The second dimension of the governance of conduct coalesces around a notion of 'responsibility' defined as a proactive and empowering mechanism. Here, the 'responsible tenant' is conceived first and foremost as a member of the wider community. This brings with it a requirement to desist from behaving in ways detrimental to the community as well as duties to participate in activities that are perceived as beneficial to the community e.g. neighbourhood policing. With regard to the latter, tenants



become conceptualised as important governors of ASB and are seen to owe duties to those communities to ensure their well-being. Tenants must, however, also (self)regulate their behaviour in accordance with norms of wider communities. Responsibilisation strategies, therefore, emphasise the 'ethical responsibility' upon tenants to behave in accordance with community and housing management values and therefore exercise self-governance (Flint, 2002). As a consequence, populations and individuals are classified according to the extent to which their behaviour meets the norms of self-conduct constructed by social housing agencies and others. Those accused of ASB become enmeshed in what Rose (2000) refers to as 'circuits of exclusion' that seek to rehabilitate them, through control of their behaviour or by mitigating the risk that they pose to the wider community (Card, 2006).

Flint suggests that this 'new politics of conduct' has worked to broaden out the contract between citizen and government beyond the requirement of individuals to regulate their own conduct to incorporate an obligation upon citizens to take action to regulate and govern the conduct of others (for instance, those engaged in ASB). Governmental objectives are to be achieved therefore less through direct acts of state intervention, but rather by reshaping the behaviour of citizens. In line with the governmentality thesis then, what emerges, he suggests, is 'governance at a distance', in which the agency and self-regulation of individuals are utilised as 'technologies of the self' to achieve governmental aims. Governance operates, therefore, through a devolvement of state powers to a local level with new governing responsibilities imposed on both tenants and housing organisations themselves (Flint, 2006). Flint documents numerous processes that for him represent:

“the emergence of a community governance based at a neighbourhood level and founded upon the empowerment of local communities to undertake functions of ASB governance which were previously the preserve of the state (local authorities or the police). They may also be identified as a range of mechanisms through which ASB is to be tackled by self-governing communities, with a reduced role for direct state intervention” (Flint, 2006: 29).

This forms part of a wider process in the governance of ASB in which citizens are identified as ‘part of the wider policing family’ involving a transfer of power from the local state to neighbourhoods.

The following section identifies how this framework has been applied specifically to knowledge about the role of family support in the governance of conduct.

### ***Situating intensive family support in a governmentality framework***

The critical literature on family support (discussed in Chapter Three), in part, draws attention to how the ‘problem family’ and parenting practices therein are intellectually, linguistically and technically ‘constructed’ as governable, and can therefore be situated within a governmentality framework. Indeed, key assumptions and concepts derived explicitly from this perspective have been used to explore how ASB and its perpetrators are construed within governmental rationalities and become the object of particular ‘technologies of government’. Echoing Flint’s insights, Gillies (2005a), for instance, suggests that family interventions represent an attempt to encourage moral responsibility

and amount to a form of 'ethicopolitics' focusing on the ethical formation and self-management of individuals. Herein, she claims, 'good' parents are constructed as self-sufficient and self-governing and able to recognise or learn what is best for their children and tailor their behaviour accordingly. For Gillies, constraints on action, structural or otherwise, are dismissed as individuals are assumed capable of negotiating and transcending obstacles in their path by exploiting opportunities, developing skills and managing risk. Drawing on the work of Rose, Gillies (2005a) asserts that the state has, therefore, become 'facilitator' or 'enabler' rather than 'provider' seeking to 'empower' parents to fulfil their duties to the best of their abilities:

"the government constructs the worthy citizen as a self-determining, agentic individual who accepts their obligation to act morally. Reasonable, rational, moral citizens, by New Labour definition, seek to do the best for their children, and according to policy doctrine, government should play an active role in guiding and supporting them to do so. According to Rose, this amounts to a form of 'ethicopolitics', focusing on the ethical formation and self-management of individuals in order to secure wider goals of economic prosperity and social stability" (Gillies, 2005a)

Through a discursive analysis of government texts, Parr and Nixon (2008) have applied a governmentality framework to deconstruct the discursive field within which FIPs are conceptualised, in order to reveal how the state-generated idea of FIPs has been constructed as a politically legitimate and moral policy. They take the concept of 'political rationalities' from the governmentality literature to

make explicit the moral justifications, the problematisations and the presupposed distribution of tasks among governing authorities that underpin and shape FIP policy (Rose and Miller, 1992).

'Political rationalities' refer to forms of calculation about political activity and are a form of governmental rationality discussed above (Dean, 1999). These contain certain regularities including a moral dimension (concerning the appropriate powers and distribution of tasks for different forms of authority and the ideals to which the activities of government should be directed), epistemological assumptions (how objects of government are conceptualised) and a distinctive idiom that translates 'reality' into a common language amenable to intervention. This work highlights how the stated primary objective of FIPs is to change the behaviour of 'a small number of highly problematic families that account for a disproportionate amount of anti-social behaviour' in order to 'restore safety to their homes and the wider community' (Respect Task Force, 2006b). A secondary objective is to 'tackle the causes of poor behaviour', defined across Government texts primarily as poor parenting (Blair, 2005b., 2006). The epistemological basis for the linking of ASB with the 'problem family' is complex. On the one hand, government policy statements draw on moral underclass and risk factor discourses to attribute causal primacy for ASB to deficient parenting and dysfunctional families. In defining 'the problem' in these terms, it is clear that the discourse draws sharp distinctions between different types of people with a minority of 'problem families' described in emotive terms as 'hardcore offenders' who 'terrorise' the communities in which they live. On the other hand, these target families are simultaneously defined by reference to a social exclusion discourse as having 'multiple



problems' requiring 'multiple solutions'. In this context, FIPs are rationalised as a response to the inability of agencies to support these families. This construction, however, places the emphasis not on the failing of state and non-state agencies but as a failure of families' ability or willingness to engage with welfare agencies.

In setting up the object of governance in these terms, the political rationality defines the fitting relationship between responsible authorities and promotes multi-agency assemblages of state, LAs, and voluntary organisations. Moreover, and as is emblematic of wider processes of governance, the policy creates new identities for agencies as they become responsible for the regulation of ASB. In so doing, FIPs are constructed as a new brokering service enlisted to 'grip' both families and agencies involved with them. Reflecting the defining features of governmentality, families are conceptualised through a normative framework which constructs them as morally deficient and denotes certain desirable subjectivities that FIPs should aim to cultivate. Like many other strategies of government that do not simply contain and control behaviour, FIPs seek to transform the 'anti-social' subject into active self-governing, responsibilised citizens in accordance with the stated norms attributed to the wider community. Understood through the lens of governmentality, FIPs aim to challenge individuals' inappropriate attitudes and beliefs, and teach them how to behave in a pro-social manner (Gray, 2009a). It is the responsible authorities, who are rationalised as knowing what constitutes appropriate and acceptable conduct and who are responsible for proactively [re]shaping families' behaviour. A 'twin track' approach comprising support 'backed up' by the threat of disciplining sanctions provides the basis for a

distinctive 'idiom' through which the FIP policy is articulated and families rendered governable.

### ***The benefits and limitations of governmentality***

There is much that is valuable about the Foucauldian governmentality approach, and the work that has been inspired by it. Firstly, an analysis of power as ubiquitous that works to decentre the state and the understanding of programmes of government as acting at a variety of levels, draws our attention to the role of previously neglected aspects of what Rose and Miller (1992) call 'political power beyond the state'. However, it has been argued that governmentality literature does not adequately acknowledge the constitutive role of the state as a leading social force and has been criticised for over-emphasising the redundancy of the state in crime control (Joseph, 2004). Crawford (2006), for instance, argues that 'regulation within government' and 'regulation of civil society' have become more extensive and have brought with them the deployment of hierarchy, command, interventionism and ambitious social engineering. This leads him to suggest that, while the state may be being withdrawn in certain areas, far from being dead, interventionist government is alive and well, particularly in relation to the 'regulation of social behaviour'. For Crawford (2006) the current ASB agenda is epitomised by a reassertion of state authority. Indeed, he suggests that the parenting agenda, so central to ASB policy, amounts to state-sponsored social engineering, a very 'hands-on' form of governing. For many political economy writers (see below), it is the limitations of a governmentality approach that necessitate a need to refocus the analysis on the nature of state formation and power such that the state, rather than being conceived of as one node of many in horizontal partnership processes of governance, takes a central theoretical position:

"While there is much that we would agree with in this literature [governmentality], particularly the emphasis on the non-homogeneity of state structures and the contingency of state action, the assumption that the alignments which have materialised under neo-liberal conditions constitute 'action at a distance' prioritises the technical and instrumental over the ideological and normative aspects of local crime control policy" (Coleman and Sim, 2000).

Governmentality approaches are enormously important for deepening our understanding of the governance of ASB by virtue of the way it has encouraged careful attention to what is said and how it is said, to the 'construction' of the 'problem' of ASB and policy solutions. It alerts us to how the policy making process is not a rational one in which a 'real' problem is identified but highlights the context-dependent processes through which 'problems' are defined in particular places, which, in turn, necessitate the promotion of particular policy 'solutions'. However, while the focus at the level of discourse has been insightful, it is also the source of key limitations. As Flint (2002) and Prior (2007) writing about the ASB policy field have argued, a governmentality focus can over-rationalise governance processes and grant regimes of authority a level of efficacy that may not reflect the complexities that characterise them and the gaps that can open up between policy rhetoric, implementation and practice. This criticism is founded on the disregard governmentality approaches can have for the empirical (McKee, 2009; Stenson, 2005., 2008) and the lived experiences of individuals, culminating in a tendency to conceptualise 'problematisations' through the perceptual lens of the programmes and



rationalities that the authorities generate to deal with them. This draws attention to the unevenness and spatial variation in patterns of government in local, economic, cultural and social contexts:

"local political struggles over policies and practices of crime control involve a very complex and varying combination of elements that can not be uncovered by the perusal of policy documents alone. General political strategies are filtered through the prism of, for example, local sensibilities of place" (Stenson and Edwards, 2001: 74).

Edwards and Hughes (Hughes, 2007; Edwards and Hughes, 2009a) have drawn attention to evidence which reveals that the consequences of the dominant discourse on ASB and its practice implications are not clear. They emphasise the local political agency of community safety managers suggesting that community governance is defined by messy instabilities where compromise, resistance and contestation are always present. Local solutions to local problems may therefore diverge from the central vision. Similarly, Stenson (2005) has pointed to the important role that professional habitus: "the cultural, emotional and instrumental repertoires and dispositions for cognition and action" (2005: 274) plays in the mediation and contestation of the political rationalities that shape policy frameworks. These 'discontinuities' work to disrupt the logical unfolding of the governmental project (Prior, 2007: 3). For Hughes, this represents the central paradox of political power:



“actors who possess the potential to govern are not powerful when they are actually governing, but neither are they powerful when they seek to govern because they are dependent on others to carry out their commands” (2007: 188).

In response, work has begun to explore the competing ways in which the problem of 'anti-social behaviour' and their solutions are 'constructed' by practitioners working at a service delivery level and by those identified as 'victims'/'perpetrators' (Nixon and Parr, 2006; Spinney *et al*, 2006; Prior, 2007; Parr and Nixon, 2008). This has been important in dismantling the official discourse around ASB and in placing alongside the dominant discourse, the voices of those who are less often heard, importantly those regarded as the 'perpetrators' of ASB. Related to this, authors are beginning to grapple with the important notion of resistance (Flint, 2002., 2004; Parr and Nixon, 2006; Prior, 2007):

"Those who are discursively constructed as lacking in political power (and therefore as being in need of strategies of empowerment: Cruikshank 1999), the socially excluded and the marginalised, in fact have the capacity to prevent or disrupt modes of governing from achieving their intended outcomes – if only by refusing to accept their allotted role in the governmental process" (Prior, 2007: 28).

Flint (2002) has, therefore, explored how, despite attempts to 'responsibilise' them, tenants in the social housing sector have been reluctant to adopt this role. Prior has also emphasised how established modes of governing are vulnerable

to influence or challenge from other discursive formations or their component parts and beset by tensions and conflicts. Accordingly, Prior claims that complex relationships – ‘continuities and discontinuities’ – exist at a general level between different policy domains such that as well as social policy becoming criminalised, there is also evidence of crime policy becoming ‘socialised’ as what is defined by dominant discourses as a crime control problem – ASB – becomes addressed through strategies and technologies more associated with social policy. This means, he suggests, that there can be no certainties that ASB enforcement strategies will always be implemented as intended or, even if they are, that its effects will be the ones that government requires and expects.

The governmentality approach addresses particular kinds of questions in a particular kind of way with a priority accorded to *how* rather than *why* questions. Arising from this, governmentality is often viewed as a form of discourse analysis and is generally accompanied (even if implicitly) by a social constructionist epistemology and ontology:

"Anti-social behaviour has become a priority issue of concern within a number of forms of governance...Within these various forms of governance, different constructions of 'anti-social behaviour' as a problem (Jacobs *et al* 2003) and different responses to it – the deployment of different strategies and technologies – are being developed. The differences reflect, in large part, the distinctive policy discourses in which both constructions of the problem and the responses to it are constituted" (Prior, 2007: 27).

Prior's accounts of the way in which actors within different policy fields relate to the problem of ASB provides important insight into why the objects of ASB emerge when and where they do relating this to the policy contexts that generate particular types of responses to ASB. However, a focus on 'constructions' of ASB raises important questions about the extent to which governmentality studies can be adequately explanatory, even when grounded in the complex and contested spaces of the empirical. This is because the approach does not (at least explicitly) allow for any theorisation of a social 'reality' underlying discursive accounts of ASB. Indeed, social constructionists reject the quest for 'scientific objectivity' as this is equated with the pursuit of a practice independent of political influence, a refusal to acknowledge the political role of the evaluator, and a denial of the contested and relative nature of knowledge (Taylor, 2005). This has two important consequences. First, a focus on 'social constructions' of ASB implies a 'socially constructed reality' in which (put simply) no one version of events is more adequate than another and which, by implication, means that there can be no advances in knowledge. This is a particular problem for normative and policy orientated research. As Edwards and Hughes (2009b) suggest, governmentality approaches have been celebrated for releasing criminological theorising from an obligation to better represent 'reality' to instead, 'provide resources to think beyond what already exists' (O'Malley, 2006: 193, in Edwards and Hughes, 2009b). As such, they are about the production of 'performative' rather than representational concepts:

"Performative criminology is also dependent on representational criminology insofar as it aspires to translate its visions of crime and



control into practice. Beyond an anarchistic desire to 'destabilise rule' (O'Malley, 2006), the imagination of desired futures will not be translated into action unless they effectively represent an originating state from which this alternative future is projected" (Edwards and Hughes, 2009b)

This means, in turn, that governmentality approaches avoid an explicit analysis of causal processes, including the impact of social structures, although policy discourse itself is viewed as performative and replete with causal power with which it produces social change. This mirrors wider social constructionist theories that assume causal explanation must be positivist in the form of assertions that one can predict on the basis of knowing realities at point A what will happen at point B. In prioritising a socially constructed 'reality', the role of human agency and that of language and discourse is emphasised such that actors are understood to not be 'determined' by context and behaviour is not governed by 'regular' cause and effect processes. In making claims about policy effects, however, analyses *implicitly* adopt a notion of causal processes and to an extent can not avoid accounts of causation. Yet, the social constructionism or anti-positivism that pervades governmentality approaches does not offer a framework for analysing causal processes and thus how non-discursive structural forms impinge upon and constrain people and their actions (Sayer, 2000; Fitzpatrick, 2005). Governmentality perspectives fail, therefore, to offer an account of ASB policy making that can take account of the powers inherent in the structural conditions (economic, social, personal) within which they operate (Sayer, 1997). In their explication of the way in which policy problems emerge, Jacobs *et al* (2003) argue that the focus on the written text and the



spoken word as expressions of different discourses - often the focus of governmentality studies - only takes us so far. In particular, they suggest, it says little about the underlying pressures on governments and the policy interests that have informed the agenda, nor about how these came about:

"What we are left with is an end statement that is the product of a long and often complex process of political pressure, negotiation and compromise" (2003: 432).

Their claim is that policy problems are not entirely discursively constructed but are the product of a number of different 'mechanisms' that, in combination, result in the construction of a policy agenda. For a concern to become a 'problem' demanding a policy response it will often entail a combination of adverse material circumstances (structural factors) experienced by people alongside a coalition of interest groups who are able to articulate concerns as a policy problem that will be taken seriously by decision makers. Using ASB policy as an illustration, Jacobs *et al* argue that:

"...three necessary conditions have to be met for a housing problem to be accepted and acted upon. First, a convincing narrative needs to be deployed to tell a plausible story of a social problem. Second, a coalition of support has to be constructed, and finally this coalition needs to ensure that institutional measures are implemented" (Jacobs *et al*, 2003: 430).

This echoes other work on policy making processes which suggest that policy decisions are necessarily embedded within contexts shaped by power relations, institutional arrangements and values with particular policies developing momentum for a number of reasons (Hawarth and Manzi 1999; Burney 2005; Jacobs *et al*, 2003). Stenson and Edwards (2003), for instance, have pointed to similar processes with regard to the struggles over crime control problems which include attempts to interest others in adopting preferred ways to conceptualise problems; the means through which support and coalitions are formed around problematisations and the interactions between informal and formal agents of governance.

### **Political economic approaches**

Although there are important distinctions to be made between the different 'political economic' approaches, together with commonalities and overlaps between this body of work and that of governmentality scholars (indeed many draw on governmentality), they are distinguished from governmentality literature by their focus on the political-economy of the governance of conduct (Coleman; 2004). Thus, whereas governmentality theorists are primarily concerned with exploring the exercise of power and its effects or how subjects are constituted as the effects of power, political economic (often neo-Marxist) accounts place analytical importance on where and from whom power comes (Joseph, 2004). These approaches to explaining governing practices point to underlying structures and the causes of power - rather than just its effects - by expressly placing developments within the context of capitalist class relations. They proceed from a position that sees capitalism as the central social force in the modern world and so causal significance is commonly attributed to the drive for

capital accumulation, the subordination of local economies to the logic of a globalised market, and the consequent growth of social and economic inequality and conflict. Importantly, these analyses also highlight the (new) role of the state as the key political and economic unit and point to (neoliberal) state-led campaigns which entail the extension of the social and spatial penetration of capitalist markets and social relationships.

Within this body of work, approaches inspired by regulation theory (Jessop, 2002) have been particularly influential whereby new forms of 'statecraft' and state restructuring are situated within a context of dismantled Keynesian-welfarist institutions and new regulatory conventions, a Schumpeterian Workfare Postnationalist Regime (SWPR) (Peck, 2003; Stenson, 2003.,2005; Coleman, 2004; Brenner *et al*, 2004; Gray, 2009a; Kessl and Kutscher, 2008; Helms *et al*, 2007). From this perspective, the state is understood as a key part of the social and institutional conditions, or the 'mode of regulation', that help to secure the reproduction of capitalism and maintain social stability (Loopmans, 2004). Jessop (1999., 2002) has sought to identify changes in the form and functions of state governance which contribute to the regulation of a particular accumulation regime with regard to: the state's role in securing conditions for profitable private businesses (economic policy); the approach to the broad field of social policy, responsible for reproducing labour power; the main scale on which these economic and social policies are decided; and the balance between states, markets and civil society in governance processes. In so doing, he asserts that a new state form is developing that has replaced the 'Keynesian Welfare National State' (KWNS) of Atlantic Fordism.



According to Jessop, the KWNS was a particular type of state associated with post-war Atlantic Fordism, an accumulation regime based on mass production, rising productivity, rising incomes, increased demand, increased profits and mass consumption. It was characterised by 'Keynesian' strategies in promoting the conditions for capital profitability, its national scale and the state-centred deployment of social and economic policies. The KWNS had a distinctive welfare orientation as it instituted economic and social rights for all citizens so that they could share in the growing prosperity and promoted collective consumption which was beneficial for the Fordist economic growth dynamic (Jessop, 1999., 2002). In the 1970s and 1980s, this economic and political context was undermined, however, by a range of economic, social and political challenges characterised as the defining features of late modernity. As a consequence, a restructuring and general shift from the KWNS towards a SWPR was generated.

The form and function of SWPR is linked to a new wave of economic growth, namely, post-Fordism based on flexible production and an appropriately flexible workforce to secure economies of scope. The Post-Fordist state is said to be 'Schumpeterian' in its aims and modes of interventions, promoting permanent innovation and flexibility, and strengthening 'structural' and 'systemic' competitiveness. The national scale is said to have lost primacy and sub-national as well as supra-national scales are given greater responsibilities in both economic and social policies. The latter are transferred upwards (to a global/EU level), downwards (to regional, urban and local levels), and sideways (cross national alliances). With the transfer of state power downwards, cities and regions have become major resources in the emerging economic and



social policies, and governance practices of the SWPR. They compete to develop plans and projects to attract investment and jobs and enhance their performance in competition with other places, becoming 'entrepreneurial' actors in their own right (Jones and Ward, 2000; Jessop, 1997). Social policy is conceptualised by a shift from 'welfare' to 'workfare', whereby the provision of welfare services prioritises business over individual needs. In general, the aim is to get people from welfare into work, rather than resort to allegedly unsustainable welfare expenditures, and, in addition, to create enterprising subjects and overturn a culture of dependency (Jessop, 2002., 1999; Peck and Tickell, 2002). It is argued that cuts occur where social spending is concerned with those who are not active members of the labour force and where the social wage is seen as an unproductive deduction from revenues. Furthermore, the shift away from the once-dominant social-welfarist orientation of the state has given way to new modes of government based on the punitive regulation both of poverty and poor subjects whereby marginal populations are either made "useful" or subject to the "iron fist" of a penal state, for example, through the imposition of ASBOs (Peck, 2003; Wacquant, 2008). Finally, the SWPR represents a redrawing of the perimeters of responsibility of the state or 'state-crafting' (Wacquant, 2008). The mode of regulation has changed from a hierarchic statist model to a more heterarchical model - a move from government to governance – whereby state functions are transferred to or shared with other actors, institutional arrangements or regimes, leading to a blurring between public and private. Notwithstanding this, although governance is represented by what Jessop sees as the deceptive notion of the 'hollowing out' of the state, this is not understood to be the end of the national state, but

rather a relativisation of scale. The state is said to have been 'rescaled' in terms of its institutional boundaries and scope for intervention.

Locating their work within this broader context, a number of political economic accounts of the governance of ASB have focussed their attention on case studies of the interrelationships between strategies of urban regeneration and the policing and regulation of public space, and the ways in which the spaces of urban centres are subject to forms of social control (Johnstone and MacLeod, 2007; Coleman, *et al* 2005; Hughes, 2007; Belina and Helms, 2003; Macleod, 2002; Ward, 2003). It is suggested that at the heart of the concern with re-imaging and remarketing cities is an emphasis on creating visually pleasing spaces and ensuring that places are seen to be safe. This has led to a concern with the way in which urban spaces are increasingly becoming policed and sanitised. The renaissance of the entrepreneurial city has consequently been described as "disciplined" to reflect the way in which the enhancement of a city's image is not compromised by the visible presence of marginalised groups: a process of 'governing through crime' (Coleman, 2004: 81). As a number of writers have pointed out, a 'culture of respect' is manifest largely as a mode of conduct - namely, consumption - leading to the purification and control of urban spaces (Macleod, 2002; Coleman, 2005). Indeed, public spaces are reclaimed (with, for example, the tools designed to address ASB) for those who possess economic value as producers or consumers:

"The behaviour of the unrespectable, non-consuming minority is portrayed as inhibiting the use of public space by the respectable, consuming majority. Thus the minority are regarded as not only

holding economic regeneration in abeyance, but also as infringing the civil liberties of the majority in public space” (Bannister *et al*, 2006: 942)

Writers claim that this ‘revanchist’<sup>11</sup> vernacular now forms part of a mandatory political response intended to discipline the damaging social consequences (divisions of wealth, status, and power) that continue to be generated by the contradictions of a neo-liberalising political economic agenda (Helms *et al*, 2007; Raco, 2007; Wacquant, 2008; Springer, 2008; Gray, 2009a). Punitive policies are allegedly directed at the “castaway categories” who have become an undesirable presence in public spaces and represent the “living and threatening incarnation of the generalized social insecurity produced by the erosion of stable and homogenous wage-work...and by the decomposition of the solidarities of class and culture it underpinned” (Wacquant, 2008: 12). Looking at the development of CCTV in Liverpool against a background of fiscal constraints and perceptions of Liverpool as a ‘dangerous place’, Coleman (2004., 2005) and Coleman and Sim (2000) suggest that it represents part of a surveillance continuum which has its gaze nearly always focused downwards, particularly on the urban experiences of working class youths, as opposed to upwards towards the potentially dangerous and detrimental activities of the powerful. Injurious acts taking place on the street that generate harm to women, racially victimised groups and victims of corporate crime are, according to them, off the radar of urban surveillance discourse. Kevin Ward (2003) identifies similar processes in his study of the redevelopment of East

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<sup>11</sup> Derives from the French word *revanche* meaning ‘revenge’ (Macleod, 2002: 258)



Manchester where the response was to cleanse public spaces of homeless people leaving the aesthetics of the place to prevail:

“As part of the emphasis on re-imaging the city, a range of new policing strategies were introduced, in order that new users of the city could work and play while remaining sheltered from those whose presence might disrupt this very carefully manufactured utopia” (2003:118).

These class based analyses focus on the way crime control acts as a social ordering strategy that has fallen disproportionately on the powerless and the economically marginalised to the detriment of attempts to police the powerful.

The political economy perspective also highlights how ‘entrepreneurial’ urban governance has brought with it the rise of networks and partnerships which have replaced the formal decision-making processes of local government (Ward, 2003). As such, urban government and, by implication, the securing of city spaces, is carried out by powerful public-private partnership coalitions. Given this growing involvement of business elites, community leaders, and voluntary groups in urban redevelopment, while governmentality scholars have suggested that the state now plays a reduced role, those in the political economy camp, have argued that entrepreneurial urbanism represents a reordering of the geographical scales at which the state performs its economic policy functions. Thus, rather than privilege non-state actors and processes that work to decentre the state in the analysis, political economy writers, while recognising the value of the decentring trend in theories of regulation and



control, seek to 'rematerialise' understandings of community safety by positioning it in relation to particular forms of state and social policy. They argue against an understanding of governance in its Foucauldian form and instead seek to 'bring the state back':

"On the one hand while neoliberalism aspires to create a 'utopia' of free markets liberated from all forms of state interference, it has in practice entailed a dramatic intensification of coercive, disciplinary forms of state intervention in order to impose market rule upon all aspects of social life" (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 5).

From this perspective, the state is more than parties and bureaucrats and politicians. It does not simply support other players and form partnerships with them, but rather the state exists and is constituted *through* partnerships. Formal and non-statutory partnerships cement, augment and extend relationships between central and the local state structures and their sovereignty in decision making processes (Coleman *et al*, 2002; Coleman, 2004). Thus, in local governance processes, private businesses become like state functionaries with a role within the neoliberal state. The state is not, therefore, "a singular, monolithic institution", rather, the building of partnerships between public and private sectors, for Coleman, is part of the state ensemble itself; 'partnership' constitutes and defines state activity, and is a vehicle for neo-liberal statecraft. For Coleman (2004), contemporary forms of responsibilisation are political processes implicit on the realignment of state power:

"The meanings attributed to 'responsible partner' and the empowerment of such a partner - through funding and political recognition - point to broader processes concerned with the co-ordination of the local state ensemble in a manner that seeks to explain its scope for action and influence" (Coleman, 2004: 127).

These theories emphasise that what is crucial to the ideological construction of what constitutes 'crime' or 'anti-social behaviour' is the relationship between local states, private capital and crime control.

Although political economy accounts retain an analytical emphasis on the state, the state is not perceived to be a homogenous entity that operates according to a simple and single logic. It is claimed that the state: "is a set of institutions that cannot, qua structural ensemble, exercise power" (Jessop 1990:116). The state, therefore, is not viewed as a neutral instrument of class domination nor an entity bound to serve the interests of capital regardless of who the state actors might be (Jessop, 2001). Instead, it is argued, the state selectively filters policy and is what might be described as 'pre-disposed' to pursue, or not, particular policy objectives, and importantly, ones that do not necessarily favour capitalist interests. By implication, political economy accounts suggest that it is misleading to suggest that state managers or the state itself may exercise power since state power is conditional and relational, and depends on complex webs of interdependencies and social networks linking the state to its wider environment. State power is contingent, therefore, upon the strategic endeavours of agents in particular historical contexts that exist within and beyond the state's formal boundaries (Macleod and Goodwin, 1999).

### ***Intensive family support: a political economic approach***

As we have seen in Chapter Three, family and parenting interventions have been seen as part of a drive that might be described as an "economisation" of social policy whereby an economic rationality is deployed and becomes part of the taken-for-granted ways of enacting family support policy and where the state is influential. Indeed, the notion of a 'social investment' state plays a central role in the analyses of both Lister (2006) and Featherstone (2006), while the role of a powerful coercive, punitive and disciplinary state is central in the analyses of critics such as Garrett (2007), Rodger (2008) and Goldson and Jamieson (2002) among others. Political-economy approaches to understanding the governance of community safety either directly inform or compliment these accounts by theorising not only what the state is doing but with what purpose. While governmentality alerts us to the techniques, procedures and practices through which governance is enacted in family support, for political economists, strategies of 'ethical reconstruction' and responsibilisation are anchored in capitalist class relations (Gray, 2009a). This perspective is concerned, therefore, with underlying social structures and processes, in particular, the role of the local and national state, and draws attention to the purposes of intensive family support. In such studies, the dynamics of class and capital accumulation figure as the main forces driving ASB policy, and family support is located as an example of the subordination of social policy to economic policy.

Viewed through this theoretical lens, intensive family support in the field of ASB can be conceived of as a state-led form of intrusive social control that is coercive and exclusionary, and that maintains class inequalities. Indeed, the



residential element of intensive family support projects, that Garrett (2007) has been particularly critical of, might be perceived to be primarily motivated by a logic of spatial exclusion within the wider cleansing of public spaces and neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the moral regulation and the responsibilisation processes at the heart of family support interventions, which were discussed in Chapter Three, might be conceptualised within this framework as part of a larger state-led social ordering strategy designed to re-establish the conditions for sustained capitalist accumulation. This alerts us to how concerns about the behaviour of 'problem families' might be built on a narrow definition of what constitutes 'responsible' behaviour and a reduced notion of citizenship associated with the goals of creating 'work ready' individuals. This suggests that while project staff in family support interventions might not be passive agents of advanced capitalism, they may mobilise particular logics which contain strategies that articulate the interests of powerful class factions and help sustain unequal class relations (Gray, 2005a). From this perspective, the dynamics of class and capital accumulation are central and family support is viewed, not as having an apolitical goal of reducing ASB, but as market-orientated and centred on the intersection of support and work; the intervention becomes a "social investment". Such practices might, in turn, be viewed as part of a repressive 'revanchist' state apparatus (Edwards and Hughes, 2009b) that targets the economically marginalised and works to reinforce unequal social relations by reinserting families into the lower reaches of the labour market (Peck, 2003; Coleman, 2004).

Furthermore, from this perspective, the state remains relevant to understanding the role of intensive family support, playing an active part both in ideological and



policy setting terms. The partnership arrangements that administer intensive family support projects might be anticipated as comprising a coalition of state and capitalist elites, and as being representative of a reassertion of sovereign authority with the particular aims of advancing the interests of capital (Hughes and Edwards, 2002). We might expect to see decision-making processes decentralised and devolved from local tiers of government to multi-agency partnerships but, at the same time, we might also expect to see an intensification of state power through for instance, financial control, performance management regimes, powers of policy direction and definition (Clarke, 2004a). This is essentially an economics-oriented argument in which the (capitalist) state and the market are accorded explanatory privilege.

### ***The benefits and limitations of political economy***

There are certain overlaps between the ways in which political economy and governmentality approaches understand new modes of governance but they differ in important ways. The former offers *explanation* while the latter centres more on *description* highlighting the techniques and practices of discipline and control. Governmentality theorists tend to give power relations primacy over that out of which they emerge i.e. underlying structures and social relations. Some writers have opted for the governmentality approach precisely because it does not understand the shift to governance in terms of changes in the economy and the state (Stenson, 2000). It all but avoids questions of underlying social structures and denies the primary importance of class, state or economic relations for instance, and instead concentrates on networks of power-knowledge relations, thus: "it is never clear what power is exercised for and, consequently, it cannot be clearly said what it is that any possible resistance may be exercised against" (Joseph, 2004). It is essentially politically

neutral and does not help us to decide if we should be "for" or "against the present" (Kerr, 1999). In contrast to governmentality approaches, however, political economy literature is explicitly political and does engage with normative questions regarding *who* and *what* is the subject of regulation and for what purposes and aims:

"The emphasis within the governmentality literature on how government is possible – its techniques and procedures – has downplayed questions of why forms of rule have been adopted – their normative and value laden underpinnings" (Coleman and Sim, 2000: 632).

Applied to studies of ASB, such an approach entails questions about not only the varied meanings and constructions of ASB, but the social relations out of which they emerge and which they reinforce. Thus, the perspective entails a return to the analytical concept of 'ideology' (Coleman, 2004) and the notion that practices and discourses are misrepresentations which conceal real purposes and interests (Clarke, 2005), and contribute to changed relationships between the economy, society and the state to the greater advantage of capital. Whereas governmentality eschews 'sociological realism' (Rose and Miller, 1992), political economy is, therefore, a more 'realist' sociology that seeks to unearth 'real' interests behind social control strategies, hence a focus on the role of the capitalist state and powerful actors as a core category of analysis. Such an endeavour entails interpreting meaning and action through an analysis of the historical and material contexts – the structural constraints - in which they

occur. Social structures, particularly economic ones are understood as determining contexts and, also, as oppressive.

The political economic approach has, therefore, focused the analysis of community safety back to the state and this is where its analytical power lies. Moreover, such accounts aim to avoid the determinism of traditional Marxism and so conceive of the state as an open system without substantive unity. Despite this, political economy has been criticised for an overly structural analysis of community safety processes that does indeed offer a deterministic analysis. Although Coleman, following Jessop, asserts that the state is not a homogenous entity, writers located in this school of thought do tend to offer deterministic accounts in which the capitalist state and the market are accorded explanatory privilege (Hughes, 2007; Macleod, 2002). Indeed, in this type of analysis, the state is essentially a capitalist state and agencies involved in partnership working form part of a new statecraft:

“the complex institutions that, while claiming to act in the public interest, are seen to act disproportionately to secure the interests of capital and the social classes and institutions that benefit most from it. Agencies of crime prevention, policing and criminal justice are seen as core components of the state” (Stenson, 2000: 234).

From this perspective, discourse is conceived as a level through which fundamental forces pass but is understood to exercise little affectivity on its own. Rather, its content ‘exemplifies’ greater processes, enables them to come true or performs an ideological function (Clarke, 2004b). Thus, whereas



governmentality approaches emphasize the productive power of language, political economy approaches tend to have a reductive view of language, political strategies and policy content. They treat language as ideology – as intentional misrepresentation and mystification concealing real purposes and interests (Clarke, 2005). Indeed, both tend towards what Clarke (2004b) calls systemic views of success – reproduction happens seemingly effortlessly.

Furthermore, although writers in the field recognise the prevalence of spatial/temporal variation in the materialisation of community safety and attempt to ground analysis at a local level, it is argued that political economic accounts, such as Coleman's (2004), while not being crudely deterministic, do tend to downplay the importance of agency and choice (Hughes, 2007). The approach, therefore, fails to provide an adequate framework for local variation with an overemphasis on global and generalised processes together with a lack of attention on struggle, negotiation and compromise. The charge is that this literature, like governmentality, fails to take adequate account of how social control is enacted (Becket and Herbert, 2008). Hughes (2007) has referred to non-governmental scholarly work as a 'radical totalitarian' thesis and suggests that in failing to explore the policy making and implementation process, such work does not tell us about the tangible outcomes of actors' intentions and their 'success' or 'failure' when put into practice. Hughes emphasises that despite the seemingly smooth unfolding of the central state's policy agenda on ASB, the manner of the local implementation is by no means a simple story of growing authoritarianism and institutionalised intolerance despite the latter's ascendancy in the tough talk of both central and local government actors. Echoing critiques directed at governmentality, Hughes suggests that political economy literature



does not give voice to the possibility for negotiation and resistance and effectively overplays the success of political projects. Moreover, as Hughes (2007) has pointed out, the particular normative stance, that of 'dystopianism', adopted by political economy theorists almost removes the possibility that community safety initiatives, such as CCTV, can have positive effects for peoples safety:

"the central claim in Coleman *et al*'s work in Liverpool is nonetheless of a further intensification of the neo-liberal hegemony of the decades since the 1980s in which, in homage to the neo-marxist analysis of Hall *et al* (1978) and Scraton (1987), corporate and market populism is to the fore, aided and abetted by the 'authoritarian state' and its 'policing of the crisis'...The thesis is generally dystopian, if not Orwellian, in its portrayal of contemporary developments and runs the risk of being theoretically and politically foreclosed in its analysis and critique" (Hughes, 2007: 176-177).

### **Constructing a conceptual and theoretical framework: a 'realistic' understanding**

The two broad approaches discussed above are not necessarily mutually exclusive. This thesis is built on an appreciation of the value of keeping both approaches in view, rather than assuming the superiority of one theoretical perspective or the other:

“Each of these positions has flaws and they certainly do not sit comfortably together. But their visions of the current situation reveal different dynamics that we should not neglect” (Clarke, 2005: 456).

The conceptual tools that governmentality and political economy theories have on offer can be used to aid understanding, without one or the other being prioritised: this thesis is concerned with drawing out the tensions, inconsistencies and insights each has to offer. In so doing (and countering some of the criticisms of both approaches), the thesis will build on the work of a number of academics currently writing in the field of community safety policy who argue for a move from aspatial abstract theorisation to empirical studies. Such a move attempts to place ‘the local’ at the centre of the analysis in a way that recognises the multiple, complex and contingent factors that generate social phenomena, (Clarke, 2004b.,2008). For Clarke (2004b., 2007b), this is about rescuing ‘the social’, defined by him (2004b) as a field of shifting and contested relations and positions with a ‘life of its own’, from both governmentality and political economic accounts, and thereby moving beyond linguistic as well as state-centred approaches.

Similarly, Stenson has argued for a ‘realist governmentality’ in the analysis of the local governance of community safety that shifts attention away from the abstract and text-centred studies of the changing mentalities and rationalities of rule characteristic of governmentality. Influenced by Bourdieu (1990), this perspective is described as one that “emphasises the role of politics, local culture, and habitus – including shared emotional and cognitive dispositions - in restructuring governance” (Stenson, 2008). Likewise, Edwards and Hughes

(Edwards and Hughes, 2005; Hughes, 2007) employ the critical realism of Andrew Sayer in their campaign for a "critical realist criminology" which focuses on concrete processes of crime control in particular places at particular historical moments.

This thesis has sought to adopt an approach that is analogous to that of Edwards and Hughes, and which entails a movement between the concrete and the abstract (the role of theory in data analysis is discussed further in the following methodology chapter p189-195). While the position is not used dogmatically, elements of the ideas and principles associated with the critical realist work of Andrew Sayer (1990; 2000), Danermark *et al* (1997) as well as Layder (1989) are drawn upon. Pertinent to the discussion here is critical realism's concern with 'causality'. A 'cause' is assumed to be whatever is responsible for producing change and many social scientific accounts (including those discussed above) implicitly adopt, and to an extent can not avoid, accounts of causation. Critical realism, however, offers a coherent philosophical schema for understanding the nature of social objects and the way they interact in a complex, open system, something that can only be fully discerned through empirical research.

The crux of critical realism is that social phenomena, be it actions, texts and institutions, exist regardless of interpretations of them; the social world and its structures are both socially constructed and real. From this perspective, 'structures' refer to relatively enduring relationships between social positions and practices that constrain actors' capacities and are the enabling conditions for human action (e.g. social rules and norms) (Matthews, 2009). These



structures are not 'things' with a material existence but are 'real' in the sense that they possess causal powers: "Their existence lies behind and affects manifest phenomena" (Matthews, 2009: 352). Structures furnish social objects with certain features and ways of working that are 'necessary' (indispensable) for the former to exist and be what it is (Danermark *et al*, 1997). Social structures and their causal powers do not, however, impact on individuals in a straightforward deterministic manner (as positivists would assume). Rather, concrete outcomes are understood to be conditioned by the uniqueness of geographical and historical context (other objects and their causal powers) (Sayer, 2000). As a consequence, whether the causal properties that social phenomena necessarily have (by virtue of their structure) are activated is 'contingent' on the context they inhabit (Hughes, 2007). Moreover, if they are activated the same causal power can produce different outcomes.

For Sayer (1992., 2000), abstract theory (such as governmentality and political economy) can assist researchers in identifying the necessary qualities of social objects (their structures) but empirical research is needed to identify the concrete forms (their actual workings and effects) that such objects contingently take. The role of theory then is to generate hypotheses about the nature of social structures (e.g. intensive family support), while identifying their effects is an empirical question, essentially entailing a movement between the concrete and the abstract. Sayer (2000) suggests that although knowledge about relatively durable and pervasive social structures can be theorised independently of empirical research, social theory can rarely be applied to actual situations without supplementary empirical information. In empirical research, the motivational dimension of agency needs to be elaborated since



human reasoning and choice can lead to certain (unintended) consequences; the critical realist notion of a 'cause' is tied to self-determination or human agency (Downward and Mearman, 2007). With regard to the governance of community safety, Hughes suggests that explanation must proceed through a focus on concrete processes of crime control in particular places, at certain historical moments, articulating the (necessary and contingent) causal mechanisms that are activated and identifying how they were generated by the structure of crime control interactions:

“...any crime event is structured by the necessary presence of certain mechanisms, such as a supply of motivated offenders and suitable targets (whether commodities or vulnerable persons), and the absence of others, such as capable guardians (whether these be police officers, park wardens, parents, etc). Nonetheless, the activation of these mechanisms depends on the specific conditions in which they are exercised, these conditions being other mechanisms, such as changes in local labour and housing markets, the manufacture of high value and highly portable consumer durables from the mobile phone to the ipod, the decisions of public authorities to expand or reduce the provision of leisure and educational facilities for young people, changes in the tolerance for censure of deviant behaviour etc... (Hughes, 2007: 21).

A central concern of critical realism, therefore, is with understanding the relations among objects. Separating out the contingent (neither necessary nor

impossible) from the necessary allows for an understanding about what *must* be and what *might* be the case.

It is important to note that realism does not offer an alternative 'theory' with which to understand the governance of ASB or intensive family support, nor does it necessarily help in a choosing between different substantive or general theories (e.g. governmentality or political economy). Critical realism is a philosophy both for and of the social sciences which deals primarily with ontological and epistemological aspects of the social world. It is, therefore, compatible with, contributes to and can be used to reformulate substantive social theory by invoking notions of an independent reality and causal processes. Thus, while substantive and general social science addresses theoretical issues (for example, why do family support projects occur the way they do?), critical realism performs as philosophical 'underlabourer' in this thesis (Frauley, 2007).

## Conclusion

In attempting to explain and understand social phenomena, it is important to employ both general abstract theories as well as those focusing on the specific empirical object (for example, intensive family support) (Danermark, 1997). This thesis, therefore, finds a theoretical point of departure in the theories of family support specifically (as discussed in Chapter Three) and more general theories about how power, control and authority operate within the governance of conduct reviewed above. In thinking about these issues, Chapter Four has explored two perspectives: political economy and neo-Foucauldian

governmentality. The former attributes the rise of new social control measures to the ascendance of a neoliberal global capitalism with an accompanying reconfiguration of political power and highlights the central role of the state. Governmentality approaches also link the governance of ASB to broader changes in governance processes at a macro-level characterised by technologies of the self and processes of responsabilisation, but direct analytical attention away from the actions of representatives of capital and the state towards the localised settings in which power is exercised. It provides an analytical tool box (giving us concepts such as problematisations, rationalities, technologies) to deconstruct the way in which policy problems emerge and are then managed. These two approaches have a different orientation towards the issue of ASB and in the analysis of empirical material presented in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, both approaches are kept in view.

Taken together, the literature reviewed in the previous two chapters provide the theoretical instruments and 'organising concepts' to inform this study by pointing to structural considerations, the underlying determinants and processes associated with intensive family support (Layder, 1998; Matthews, 2009). They direct our attention to a range of different questions about how we explain the intrusive and intensive nature of family support projects in the governance of ASB, including:

- What are the forms of knowledge are employed in the identification of families deemed 'anti-social'?
- How are these translated into techniques for managing these populations?
- With whose conception of social order does family support operate?

- Do intensive family support projects represent a larger governmental project centred on inculcating ethical and moral self-regulation?
- What is the role of the (central and local) state?
- Is intensive family support part of a repressive state apparatus targeted at the most vulnerable?
- Are such interventions evidence of a strong, authoritarian 'social investment' state?
- Is family support an exercise in securing the conditions for (neoliberal) capital accumulation strategies?
- What role does the agency and choice of local actors play?



## **Chapter Five**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter sets out the background to my doctoral research in terms of the motivation behind my choice of study. It also describes the approach and major stages of the research undertaken and reported on, together with critical reflections on the research process.

The previous chapter introduced critical realism as the philosophical 'underlabourer' in the thesis and described how its ontological assumptions have informed my understanding of how 'theory' is conceptualised and employed in the thesis. This chapter explains how critical realism has also informed my use of certain data collection tools and methods of analysis. The chapter begins by outlining why I have chosen to foreground the philosophical concerns of critical realism. It then tells the story of how my PhD research progressed from initial idea to theory development. In so doing, it firstly explores how my doctoral fieldwork was carried out as part of a larger Government-funded evaluation of six intensive family support projects; the data collected in one of the projects provided the empirical data for both the policy evaluation and my thesis. Although these data had a dual purpose, the chapter sets out why my thesis provides something original and different to the 'findings' that arose out of the government evaluation. The chapter then provides details of the case study project in which my doctoral fieldwork was undertaken, before

examining and reflecting on the data collection and analytical approaches I adopted. Furthermore, this chapter considers the ethical implications arising from such work.

### **Why critical realism?**

A view is taken in this thesis that it is important to foreground philosophical concerns in research. This is because any social science research endeavour engages with the social world and provides a description of it such that philosophical issues always, necessarily, underpin the conclusions that are drawn. Although researchers do not always make explicit these philosophical presuppositions, reflection on such matters is important. As Scott (Scott, 2005: 635) suggests: "to argue against the need to foreground philosophical concerns is to suggest that issues of validity, reliability and truthfulness should not be central to the work of researchers". These issues (of validity, reliability and truthfulness) can only be fully addressed through engagement with ontological and epistemological questions. As such, in what follows, I attempt to build on Chapter Four by exploring further the philosophical foundations on which the thesis is based and define, explicitly, my stance with regard to the nature of reality as I see it and my beliefs about knowledge within that reality. It is these beliefs and assumptions that have shaped the methodological choices that I have made together with my claims about data authenticity and the truthfulness of my research findings.

As already stated in Chapter Four, the thesis is underpinned by the philosophical assumptions of critical realism, in particular, the latter's acknowledgment of the existence of a social reality that exists independently of

human consciousness, its ascription of causal powers to human reasons and social structures, and its rejection of relativism in social and scientific discourses (Sayer, 1990., Wei-chung Yeung, 1997). This position challenges both 'positivist' and 'interpretivist' (Fitzpatrick, 2005; Frauley, 2007) as well as 'nomothetic' and 'idiographic' (Edwards and Hughes, 2005) strategies of explanation in the social world primarily because it provides an alternative and distinctive analysis of causation (as described in Chapter Four). In terms of the practical impact of critical realism on the approach to and conduct of my study, the particular methodological implications of its assumptions will unfold and become apparent in the sections below that discuss, in detail, the methods of data collection (see p160-163) and analysis (see p188-195) that I adopted, and how these were informed by critical realism. However, it is pertinent to be clear from the outset what, in more general terms, I believe critical realism has done for my research.

Rather than providing a unique set of methodological instruments, critical realism has provided me with a firm philosophical foundation on which I have been able to make my methodological choices and establish the truth-claims presented in this thesis. Adopting a critical realist position has enabled me to readily appeal to a real world of things and to notions of truth, objectivity and causality. In criticism of this approach, it might be argued that my thesis bears many similarities to, and therefore does not offer anything different to, research grounded in critical realism's foremost philosophical "rival", namely, (weak) 'social constructionism' which also acknowledges the existence of a real world independent of 'constructions' (Fopp, 2008a). Indeed, 'representational' claims necessarily lie at the heart of social constructionism (Fopp, 2008b) and what



Edwards and Hughes (2009b) call 'performative thinking' which is concerned with the ways in which narratives bring into being the very objects they then seek to explain. Where critical realism and social constructionist positions are at variance is arguably one of degree, in the sense that the latter often state their underlying assumptions about the existence of a material world, and the possibility of objectivity, mainly when defending their position against attacks of relativism (Fopp, 2008a., 2008b). Indeed, many social constructionists also display anti-realist tendencies on the grounds that 'realism' is synonymous with naive objectivism and claims of unmediated access to the truth (Sayer, 2000). Fopp (2008a) suggests that this is associated with the respective positions from which they draw their intellectual armoury. As such, Edwards and Hughes (2009b) argue that social science is better cultivated through a direct engagement with, rather than circumvention of, the 'burdens of sociological realism' (Rose and Miller, 1992). It is with the tools of critical realism which engages explicitly not just with epistemology but with ontology as well, that I have been able to undertake such a task.

Critical realism goes beyond social constructionism and brings to the fore that which is often tacit and underdeveloped within the latter (Fopp, 2008b). Like social constructionism, critical realism acknowledges that social scientific knowledge is historically and culturally situated but it offers the possibility of being able to judge between competing theories on the basis of their merits as explanations about the social world (Lopez and Potter, 2001). It is precisely because of this that critical realists are able to appeal to social '*science*', where causality is understood to be an essential element of the explanatory power of social theories. Thus, while it is not always clear whether social constructionists



can accommodate critical realism, critical realism does indeed accept the core assumptions of weak social constructionism (Sayer, 2000; Fopp, 2008a). It has, therefore, provided the thesis with a superior philosophical position to that of social constructionism precisely because of its avoidance of the misleading metaphor of 'construction' which invites "idealist slippage" and evades the question of the relationship of social constructions to the nature of their referents (Sayer, 2000: 92). It is for this reason that my thesis is committed to critical realism and driven by the central claim that it is unwise and erroneous to abandon claims to objectivity and the search for 'truth' in social science (Layder, 1998).

While acknowledging that absolute knowledge of reality is impossible, underpinned by critical realism, this thesis seeks to provide explanatory accounts of 'the real' on which credible, authoritative pronouncements can be made which, in turn, can seek to influence the direction of social policy (Edwards and Sheptycki, 2009). My thesis is a social scientific truth-claim but one that is fallible and open to public scrutiny, criticism or corroboration.

The remainder of this chapter tells the story of how my research progressed from initial idea to theory development. The influence of critical realism is foregrounded throughout.

### **The motivation**

The choice of my research topic was driven by my participation in a three-year evaluation (January 2004 – January 2007) of six 'intensive family support projects' operating in Sheffield, Manchester, Bolton, Oldham, Salford, and Blackburn with Darwen (hereinafter 'the evaluation'). The evaluation was

externally funded by the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), now the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the findings published in three publicly available reports (Nixon *et al*, 2006a.,2006b.,2008) referred to in Chapter Three. My motivation to undertake doctoral research about the role of these interventions was born of a desire to adopt a more reflective and theoretically-informed stance in relation to intensive family support and to (re)interrogate the data collected in order to explore a number of questions that would not be addressed in the evaluation and which were informed by critical literature such as that reviewed in Chapters Three and Four. I was particularly interested in thinking more deeply about and questioning the apparently benevolent nature of these projects that seek to control the conduct of 'problem families', and, in so doing, analyse and explore the governing processes and practices associated with this type of intervention.

I sought and was granted permission by the ODPM to use the data generated in one case study location for the purposes of my PhD research soon after the evaluation began in 2004. Permission was also gained from relevant individuals in the case study LA and from project staff. This was on the understanding that the project and LA in which it is located would not be named in the thesis or any publications arising from it. In the thesis, the project is referred to as the 'Family Support Service' (FSS) though this is not its actual name.

Given that the evaluation reports and my thesis have drawn on the same data set, there is some inevitable overlap between the findings presented in each. This thesis is, however, both original and unique for the following reasons:

1. ***The questions asked:*** Contract research sponsored by the Government and/or other non-governmental bodies is often "the object of scarcely disguised contempt" (Morgan, 2000: 71) on the grounds that the needs and demands of the funder dictate the research process and work to position the researcher in a way that compromises their autonomy and academic freedom. Such studies, it is argued, are not interested in generating critical and reflexive research (Matthews, 2009). The Government-funded evaluation that I was involved in was indeed conducted under the 'disciplinary gaze' of not only the ODPM/CLG but the Home Office who were a powerful force on the project steering group. This rendered the research team somewhat 'subservient' to the aims and objectives specified by the funder which were explicitly tied to the policy agendas and the discursive frames of the state (Morgan, 2000; Allen, 2005; Garrett, 2007). Although the social relations of this particular research production process were complex and did not straightforwardly represent a Hobbesian view of power (indeed there were many instances of the research team's resistance to the 'steer' provided by the funders), suffice to say that the end 'product' was an a-theoretical, largely uncritical, practical policy evaluation that was silent on issues of politics or ideological commitment. Thus, the nature of this work as a government funded evaluation worked to mould the research process, analysis and outputs in a way that omitted the opportunity for theorisation and critical reflection, and left questions unanswered. It was certainly not possible to be critical of the government ASB policy or intensive family support in general. The evaluation was perhaps best



described as a form of 'policy criminology' (Hughes, 2007) that has its agenda set for it and generates knowledge geared to the provision of solutions to problems defined by the client. My thesis, by contrast, while remaining policy 'relevant' (but not) shaped by policy (Burawoy, 2005), represents independent research. The freedom that the PhD granted allowed me to ask more difficult questions about the purpose of intensive family support and adopt a more critical stance in relation to the data.

2. ***Context dependency.*** The main ODPM study did not entail an analysis of data at a case-study level, the data from the six projects was decontextualised, combined and analysed in order to identify generalised findings across the six case-study projects. This left a range of important context-specific factors and research questions regarding the local implementation of the policy unaddressed. By contrast, through a re-interrogation of the interview data, the thesis prioritises the importance of locating the case-study material in a political and social context at both at a national and local level. Therefore a range of political and social forces that shaped the project are explored.
3. ***Processes of governance not 'what works'.*** The thesis is not focused on the extent to which the project 'works' and achieves its stated objectives which was the main focus of the evaluation. Rather, the analysis focuses on the family support project as a site of local policy implementation and has entailed a concern with the project's conditions of existence; its intended and unintended effects and outcomes.



4. ***A complex narrative:*** My re-interrogation of the empirical material generated from the evaluation involved a much closer and nuanced analysis of the interview transcripts. This has brought the 'undiscussed' into focus and has drawn attention to the "insufficiently stressed facets" within the publications that arose as a result of the evaluation (Garrett, 2007: 204). Accordingly, the thesis represents a form of "reflexive criminological labour" (Hughes, 2007: 202) which seeks to disturb the 'smooth narrative' (Edwards and Hughes, 2008) that defines the evaluation reports which convey a largely unproblematic, positive message about the projects. In so doing, it captures the multi-faceted consequences of intensive family support in a way the policy evaluation does not. For instance, it highlights the complexity of participant's accounts of their experience, exposing a certain ambiguity about the impact of the project and even opposition to some of the methods of 'support' provided.

### **Choosing the methods: case study research**

The broad aim of my research was to investigate the role of 'intensive family support' in the governance of ASB. To do this, I chose to undertake qualitative case study research in one location in order to enhance existing knowledge about the realisation of this particular policy agenda. The rationale for and benefits of adopting this approach are set out below.

As explained in Chapter Four, critical realism provides an alternative and distinctive view of causation which draws attention to how phenomena are contextually defined by both necessary relations and contingent conditions. This means that 'context' is intrinsically involved in causal processes and underlines the analytical importance that should be accorded to the former in understanding social phenomena. This means that context cannot be 'controlled for' without distorting causal process (Sayer, 2000), nor should it be something that is just referred to as 'background' to research. Rather, context is constitutive of social objects under study and, therefore, vital for explanation (Sayer, 1990). As such, research informed by realist assumptions seeks to explain social phenomena by reference to a range of different mechanisms and powers that are contingent on specific historical and local contexts.

Certain research designs, such as case study research, better lend themselves to analyses that are sensitive to contextual and causal circumstances. As such, in critical realist research less weight is placed on 'extensive' research (Sayer, 1990; Danermark, 1997), typically associated with quantitative methods and concerned with the discovery of common properties and general patterns within a population as a whole, a concern with 'breadth' rather than 'depth'. The latter are seen to be of limited value as they only offer forms of description that reveal formal relations concerning similarity/dissimilarity, correlation etc, as opposed to substantial relations; they can not answer questions regarding causes (Danermark *et al*, 1997). Critical realists claim that other 'languages' are needed to understand the nature of social objects and the way they behave

(Sayer, 1992; Crinson, 2001)<sup>12</sup>. Emphasis is therefore placed on 'intensive' research which emphasises causal explanation in a specific or a limited number of case studies, be it a person, organisation, cultural group, an event, process, or a whole community (Sayer, 2000). This more detailed and focussed approach is necessary to understand the specific causal connections and dynamics associated with the phenomena under study (Matthews, 2009). Qualitative methods are associated with this type of research strategy on the basis that they help to clarify complex relationships and processes that are unlikely to be captured by predetermined response categories or standardised quantitative measures.

Critical realist case study research differs, however, from other case study methodologies. Although there is no agreement on exactly how a case study should be defined (Yin, 2003), it is generally emphasised that the intention of case study research is to gain an "in-depth" understanding of the concerned phenomena in a their natural or 'real-life' contexts; since they get their particular significance from this context (Danermark, 1997., Dobson, 2001). Beyond this, they may be designed to provide descriptions of phenomena, to develop theory, or to test theory (Dobson, 2001). Case study research is, however, often associated with philosophical perspectives that tend to place a greater emphasis on human experience, meaning-making and the way in which the world is socially constructed and understood; approaches which might be referred to as belonging to an 'interpretivist' tradition. These approaches share a number of general ontological assumptions including the belief that there is no

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<sup>12</sup> Critical realism is however compatible with a range of research methods depending on the object under study e.g. examining changes in crime trends requires quantitative methods while understanding something about emotions, meanings or motivations then qualitative methods may be more appropriate (Matthews, 2009).



one objective reality, nor fundamental truth, but multiple realities that are locally and culturally specific (contingent and non-generalisable) and can be altered by the knower (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Furthermore, the belief in a socially or discursively constructed social world leads to a view that it is not 'determined' and, with that, 'causality' (defined as the regularity assumption) is rejected or downplayed (Sayer, 1997). Case study research, therefore, often seeks to understand why and how phenomena might be experienced in certain ways (Taylor, 2005; Hodge, 2008) and it is often assumed to be inappropriate to make generalisations. Rather, detailed examination of 'idiographic' cases is thought to demonstrate the importance of paying attention to the diversity of experience which may, in turn, challenge and deepen existing understandings of social phenomena (Meek, 2007).

Moving beyond description or interpretive understanding, critical realist case study research is concerned with seeking (theoretically informed) *explanations* of social phenomena. The approach brings with it an assumption that there is an underlying truth that is amenable to explanation and that research should be concerned with identifying the social causes and effects of the object under study (in this thesis the FSS) (Danermark *et al*, 1997; Dobson, 2001). In contrast to interpretivists, for critical realists, empirical case studies are not just a study of contingencies (that which is neither necessary nor impossible), but are also concerned with documenting structures and necessity in the world which are relatively enduring, may exist independently of the case study context and determine what it is that exists. For critical realists, contingent relations between social objects do not determine what exists, but do determine whether and how that which exists will manifest itself:



“(E)vents arise from the workings of mechanism which derive from the structures of objects, and they take place within geo-historical contexts. This contrasts with approaches which treat the world as if it were no more than patterns of events” (Sayer, 2000: 15).

Critical realism does not expect to find successful generalisations at the concrete level because the world is an open system whereby causal processes might not produce the same results due to the impact of other contingent factors. Notwithstanding this, a concern with exploring necessity in the social world makes comparison meaningful as it helps to distinguish what must be from what might be the case (Edwards and Hughes, 2005).

### Selecting the case study site

Although there were six projects in the evaluation to choose from, the FSS was selected as the case study for my PhD research because it operated a ‘core’; ‘dispersed’ and ‘outreach’ (see p167) service which made it particularly interesting. Indeed, it is those projects with a ‘core’ residential unit which have been the subject of most controversy (Garrett, 2007). Further, due to prior associations with the lead officer, a relationship of trust had already been built between myself and the project management staff and I envisaged that they would be cooperative and that this would help facilitate the research process.

While the fact that my research formed part of a larger evaluation which constrained the research to some degree, particularly with regard to when fieldwork was carried out (see Appendix One), it was also beneficial in enabling

access to research participants. Without the access to the project, facilitated through the government funded evaluation, it is unlikely that I would have been able to secure the consent of the project to take part in research solely for the purpose of my PhD. Indeed, at the time the research began, the project was a controversial initiative both locally and nationally, and it was struggling to muster political viability (see Chapter Six). This was reflected in the way intensive family support projects were described in the media at that time, with the labels used to describe them carrying a host of negative connotations e.g. 'sin bins' (Parr and Nixon, 2008). Conceived at a local level, the project also developed a somewhat alternative conceptualisation of 'the problem' of ASB that, in part, contradicted the national, popular discourse dominant at the time (this is explored in more detail in the next chapter). By its very nature, the project was also sensitive as it dealt not only with the highly charged issue of ASB but with very vulnerable families who the project needed to ensure were protected. It is improbable, therefore, that I would have been permitted to carry out a study of such a sensitive project and its practices, let alone gain access to the families it was supporting. However, the project management were keen to be involved in the larger evaluation seeing it as an opportunity to gain some recognition and political credibility of their own. Furthermore, perhaps because the research was part of a larger evaluation, the project staff did not seek to have any influence over how the research was conducted, what kinds of questions would be asked or the interpretation of findings. The project staff and lead officer in the LA were also very supportive and allowed me to question them during interviews on topics that were obviously for the purposes of my PHD. After one interview with the LA lead officer, she explained that she had actually been more candid in response to some questions knowing they were for my PhD than

she might have been had the purpose of the interview been purely for the national evaluation. Indeed, it was felt that enough trust had been built that she was confident that the more sensitive information would remain in the PhD, and eventually the wider academic domain, but would not be included in the evaluation.

### **The Family Support Service**

The FFS I chose to focus on is in one of England's largest metropolitan boroughs with a population of over 500,000. The City was once one of England's main industrial centres, but during the 1980s and early 1990s suffered enormous job losses. Between 1979 and 1987, 70,000 jobs were lost from the economy representing one quarter of the total, which left large parts of the city derelict and suffering from large-scale unemployment and deprivation. This resulted in unpopular housing estates, a large oversupply of homes, and a subsequent large-scale programme of demolition.

Over the past 20 years, several organisations have been created with the purpose of regenerating the city's economy and this has brought large private investments, the renewal of many inner city residential neighbourhoods and increases in job growth. Despite regeneration efforts, the city remains one of stark social and economic contrasts with large areas of deprivation. Indeed, while one third of city's ward's rank in the 10% most deprived in the country, three are amongst the 1% least deprived.

In the 1980s the LA focused their attention not only on the management of the local services that the national (Conservative) government placed under local



government control, but played an active part in promoting the well-being of community life to combat the negative effects of economic decline including an infrastructure of support services for vulnerable people. In interviews, the LA was described as being “progressive” and “forward thinking” in terms of working jointly with the voluntary sector and was said to have established strong partnerships well before “it became a government agenda, before it became a buzzword”.

The FSS was established in March 2003 with the explicit purpose of addressing the issue of families trapped in “cycles of homelessness” due to alleged ASB. The project was delivered by the city council’s ‘Housing Solutions Service’ but also sat within the authority’s Anti Social Behaviour and Homelessness Strategies. Its aims and objectives are detailed below taken from official and publicly available literature about the service.

### ***Aims and objectives***

The service claimed to work holistically to support the family to achieve a wide range of objectives which include the following:

- Keep their homes, and to understand their responsibilities as tenants.
- Settle into a community, and live peacefully with their neighbours.
- Nurture and raise their children in an appropriate manner.
- Deter crime and bullying.
- Improve school attendance.
- Reduce the number of clients not in education, employment or training.



- Reduce alcohol and substance mis-use for young people and for parents.
- Improve their health and well-being.
- Reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy.

The service consisted of three elements:

- **'Core intervention':** Support provided in a core residential unit providing space for up to three families in self-contained furnished flats located within a single building. Properties in the Core building are let on a license, with strict rules including restrictions on visitors and curfews for both children and parents. Support workers control access to the building and are able to monitor and support families 24 hours a day. These properties are managed by FSS.
- **'Dispersed intervention':** Support provided for families in properties which are located throughout the city and are managed by the FSS. Occasionally a family will be given a new tenancy if appropriate, but this depends on individual circumstances. Usually a family, who are City Council tenants, will stay living in their home but the management of the tenancy will be transferred from the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) to FSS by variation, whilst the family are clients of FSS. When the family exits the service successfully, the management of the tenancy is signed back over to ALMO.

- **‘Outreach intervention’:** Families are supported on an outreach basis. This offers support to tenants to prevent them losing their accommodation while their tenancy remains with their original landlord. This enables work with any tenure, including non-council tenants and owner-occupiers. Outreach clients receive the same amount of support as families in dispersed tenancies – the only difference is that FSS do not directly manage the tenancy.

The service provided by the FSS falls into two distinct categories: the provision of direct work with children/adults such as one-to-one support, mentoring, formal/structured activities, and indirect work on behalf of children/adults such as referrals to other organisations/out of school activities, liaison with other agencies. The range of interventions include the following:

- The provision of parenting and household skills training through either formal courses or through one-to-one guidance.
- Liaison/advocacy on behalf of families.
- Referral/signposting to other services/organisations e.g counselling, substance misuse, anger management.
- Tenancy-related support.
- Self esteem/confidence building.
- Advice and support to families with schooling issues.
- Support from staff and sessional workers (who are available to work evenings and weekends) to enable young people to access universal or targeted activities.
- One to one key worker packages for young people.

- Activities during school holidays.

The stated underlying principle of the project is:

*"High support, alongside high challenge, and appropriate use of enforcement action. We work to support families to make positive changes to their communication and behaviour. Where necessary we will also use legal remedies to motivate the family to change"*

(FSS publicity literature)

Project workers exercise professional discretion around how to work with the family and the pattern of contact is determined by the support worker who decides the length of sessions, the location and the nature of the work carried out. The level of 'support' provided to families is high compared to that which may be provided by other family services. The project is contracted to visit families at least three times a week but are often visited daily, particularly when first referred to the project or during times of crisis. Regular contact by telephone also takes place outside of face-to-face visits. As such, the ratio of families to project workers is very low, usually three per project worker. The duration of the intervention varies depending on each family and their needs. The average duration is 18-24 months.

### ***Staffing***

When the fieldwork began in 2003, the project team comprised a Project Manager; Deputy Manager; six Project Workers and a Children's Worker (seconded into the FSS team to work directly with children under 13 and to co-

ordinate support for older children from other services e.g. YOTs), two night time workers for the core unit, as well as an administrative support worker.

### ***The referral, admissions and assessment process***

Referrals have to be for a family and there has to be a history of reports of ASB being committed. The decision of whether to offer a family support is based on;

- whether the family pose a manageable level of risk to workers
- if the ASB is severe enough to warrant this intensive service
- if there are other services or agencies that may be able to offer more suitable support for their needs
- the capacity of the service at the time.

Any professional can make a referral e.g. social services, police, housing, school. Families must, however, agree to the referral being made and, as such, it is 'formally' the decision of the family to get involved with the project or not. However, although the family's decision to accept a referral to the project is ostensible voluntary, as other evaluations (e.g. Nixon *et al*, 2006) have pointed out, the extent to which families have any volition is narrow as was reflected in interviews with local actors:

“Some families are absolutely desperate for help no matter what form it is and others have really been shoe horned into it. Social Services have said ‘we’ll start care proceedings if you don’t work with them,’ or similarly, you know, someone in the council has said to them ‘we will evict you or we’re not going to offer you another



tenancy but this one' so they've got to work with us. There's very few families that actually after we've pestered them for a couple of weeks still refuse to work with us" (PW3)

"You get them on board because they, basically if they don't work with us, they, either they get evicted from the property or they get their children taken away, so, it's almost forced because if they don't want that to happen, then they come and work with [the FSS]" (PM2)

After a family is referred to the project an assessment is carried out. This involves a designated project worker collating information about the family from a range of agencies including housing, the police, social services, health and education in order to develop a comprehensive picture of the family's history, current circumstances and welfare support needs. This process can take up to three weeks. Based on the information, a report is put together which then goes to a multi-agency admissions panel, who then make a joint decision as to whether or not a family should be accepted by the project. The panel includes representatives from social services, the police, education, the LA ASB team, area housing officers, the youth offending team, and the LA Housing Solutions service. The panel also reviews ongoing cases and agrees exit strategies for families. If a family is rejected, the FSS tries to ensure that the family is channelled into appropriate services. Once a family has been accepted a Support Plan is drawn up, much of which is based on the assessment. This plan is reviewed regularly, usually on a quarterly basis.

### **Undertaking the fieldwork**

The thesis research was based on semi-structured, in depth, face-to-face interviews as the main research method. A total of 35 interviews with 26 research participants were conducted. This included:

- Six interviews with five project staff (one project worker was interviewed twice).
- Six interviews with seven actors (two were interviewed together) from various agencies working at a service delivery level and involved with each of the six families who took part in the research (four of these eight had referred to the FSS one of the families which took part);
- Three interviews with senior actors involved with the FSS primarily at a strategic level.
- Two interviews with the FSS lead officer based in the LA (the line manager of the FSS Project Manager).
- Three interviews with four residents (two were interviewed together) who lived in close proximity to the project's residential unit.
- 14 interviews with six women supported by the project.
- One interview with a local councillor where the core unit is located.

As explained above, the data on which the thesis is based was collected as part of the broader evaluation and so the rationale for the timings of the interviews was dictated by the research strategy and practicalities of completing this larger piece of work. The interviews were conducted in six phases between July 2004 and January 2007.

Specific details regarding when interviews were conducted in the case study location are detailed in Appendix One. Since these interviews took place over the course of more than two years, the project was developing and changed during that time. This has been kept in mind during the analysis and reflected on where relevant.

### ***Gaining consent***

All those who took part in the research consented to do so and were made aware of the dual purposes of the research. Informed consent was obtained from research participants by asking them to sign consent forms. These forms outlined the purpose of the research and the use that would be made of the findings. The form also confirmed that the participant's participation was voluntary, that they could withdraw from the interview and research at any time, that the data would remain confidential and anonymised, and that they could refuse to answer any questions during the interview. The consent form for women referred to the project also asked interviewees for agreement that I could share information about them with other agencies. This enabled me to discuss their case with those who had referred them and, in some cases, other agencies that were involved with the family. It also gave me access to their 'case file' that was held by the project.

The families' consent to take part in the research was negotiated by project staff who acted as 'gate-keepers'. Although this means there is a possibility that the project had selected families who were more likely to hold positive views of the project, given that the research was part of an evaluation of their service (although the evaluation did not seek to compare projects and data was anonymised), it is unlikely that the project 'selected' particular families on the

basis of what they might say. At the time initial interviews were carried out with families, staff were asked to select individuals who had only recently been referred as the intention was to 'track' families through the process. Given the small numbers working with the project this left only a small number from which the project could select families to seek their involvement in the research. Furthermore, it was the intention of the broader study that all families living in the core would be interviewed, again limiting any option of selective targeting of certain families. These practicalities determined the sample of people who would be interviewed. Once consent had been granted, prior to the interview, I talked through the consent form with all interviewees to reiterate what was contained in the form and ensure the participant that confidentiality would be maintained throughout the research which meant they could talk freely about the project and be critical if they wished without fear that what they said would become the knowledge of the project staff.

A payment of £10 was provided to the participants for each interview. This was in recognition that researchers need to "value the contribution, knowledge and skills" of the participants and payment should be provided to them, particularly if they have no or little money as compensation for their time (Booth 1999: 78). Hollway and Jefferson (2000: 84) contend that payment for participants' time should be seen as "equalising the relationship (our money for their time)". It is also symbolic of the researchers' respect for the participation of these people.

The project management staff also provided me with the contact details of people who were members of the steering group as well as the details of the person who referred the family. I was fortunate enough to have good



responses from these individuals and nearly all agreed to participate. Access to all individuals was perhaps relatively straightforward since the person who had referred me to them (FSS staff) and the fact that the research was for the purposes of a Government-funded study (as well as my own research) gave the research some additional kudos. One referrer and one steering group member declined to take part in the study.

### ***The interviews***

The interviews followed a semi-structured format in order to allow discussion on questions, topics and issues that were of pertinence to the research. The interviews did not, however, follow a rigid format but were dynamic and adaptive. Although the interviews were structured to a certain extent by the topics I wanted to cover, the interviewees were offered the opportunity to expand on questions, raise new topics and, in part, determined where the interview went. Thus, if the interviewee did not want to address a certain topic, it was not discussed and by the same token if they were particularly interested in another topic, it was discussed more than intended or even desired (Hoffman, 2007). The latter was important in interviews with the women using the service who were often allowing me access to private and intimate knowledge about themselves and it was ethically just to give them the space to talk at length on matters of particular significance to them, sometimes if it was not directly pertinent to the research. The sequence of questions was not followed formulaically. Rather, the questions and wording was, in part, dependent on the atmosphere and degree of rapport established with the participant. This meant that participants gave responses that varied in content and not all participants were asked the same questions. Thus, it was not possible to make comparisons of responses from all participants on all issues. All interviews

were recorded and transcribed by a professional transcribing service. Generally, interviews lasted around an hour in duration, but ranged from between half an hour and two and a half hours.

All interviews undertaken in the case study location were conducted by myself and I developed all interview topic guides (see Appendix Two). These took account of the requirements of both the broader study and the research questions specific to my thesis and so included additional and different questions to those used in other case study locations in the evaluation. An additional interview was also carried out solely for the purposes of my research (with a new project manager appointed after the first manager left her position). The following section reflects on the process of undertaking the interviews and the ethical issues that I faced.

### **Ethics in practice and reflexivity**

Ethical issues were particularly important during the interviews with the women supported by the project and I have therefore devoted a substantial amount of this section to these interviews. This is not to suggest that ethics are not an important aspect of any interview but the reasons I have chosen to place particular attention on interviews with this set of respondents are two-fold. Firstly, the fact that the women were 'vulnerable' and the research was focused on a particularly sensitive topic and, secondly, it was these interviews that I found the most difficult to undertake for reasons that are important to reflect on. By contrast, the interviews with both practitioners and residents felt less unequal.

### *Interviewing the project users*

There are certain ethical considerations when interviewing vulnerable women about 'sensitive issues' or "socially charged and contentious areas of human behaviour" (Barnard, 2005: 2. In Liamputtong, 2006: 5). There is no precise definition of the 'vulnerable' but often the term is underpinned by notions of diminished autonomy and increased risk to adverse social outcomes. As such vulnerable people will include those who are 'impoverished, disenfranchised, and/or subject to discrimination, intolerance, subordination and stigma (Nyamathi, 1998: 65 In Liamputtong, 2006: 2). Based on these descriptions, the women who agreed to take part in the research can justifiably be defined as 'vulnerable'. Indeed, they suffered stigma associated with the label 'anti-social', and as a result were alienated from the wider communities in which they lived. They commonly suffered long-term health problems, had low incomes and lived in areas of deprivation and high crime. Extreme care is demanded during research with such groups in order to ensure they are not left worse off after taking part. The approach I took in undertaking the study drew on feminist research practices in an attempt to ensure that my research practice was ethical.

Although there is no universal definition of feminist research, I use the notion broadly and draw on the 'moments of agreement' (Franks, 2002) between feminisms to refer to research which aims to 'capture women's lived experiences in a respectful manner that legitimates women's voices as sources of knowledge' (Campbell and Wasco, 2000: 783. In Liamputtong: 10). Feminist methodology also explicitly acknowledges how any effort to give research participants a 'voice' reflects not only the participant's interpretation of the

phenomena under study but the researcher's interpretation as well. This is what enables a 'double hermeneutics' which involves interpreting others interpretations (Danermark, 1997). As such, it is acknowledged that research only ever tells a partial and fallible story about the lives of the people under study (Gillies, 2004). Adopting a feminist methodology therefore also means placing as much importance on the *process* of research as the *outcome* in order to make transparent the process of knowledge production. This means engaging in a reflexive exploration of the research endeavour involving not just "talking about ones own experiences from ones own perspective" (Skeggs, 2002), but in terms of acknowledging positionality and the utilisation of cultural resources in research relations (Edwards, 2004). The thesis therefore acknowledges that judgements about 'reality' are always situated in and relative to the context within which they are produced, and maintains that research should be respectful of respondents' experiences and understandings. However, in line with the underpinning tenets of critical realism, it also maintains a position that does not dispute the existence of a material reality but assumes the existence of the 'real' and, with that, 'truth' (see below) (Letherby, 2003).

Despite broad agreement on the need for reflection on the researcher's role in the production of knowledge, it is difficult to know exactly how to reflect on all the ways our 'positionality' - our social and cultural identities - influence the research context, either at the point of data collection or indeed in the data analysis and presentation of findings. Reflexivity is an inherently difficult process and, as Rose (1997) points out, relies on the idea that a 'wider power structure' exists and can be known and understood by the researcher. However, although it is accepted that the characteristics of those involved in an



interview are likely to have an effect on the conversation that takes place, there is also broad agreement that it is difficult to know exactly what this effect is (Rose, 1997; McDowell, 1998; Smith, 2005). Indeed, the researcher's positionality and related power relations will shift between and within each interview (Smith, 2005). The full context of a research project is vast, therefore, and the demand for transparently reflexive positionality is almost bound to fail such that academics can not claim to be entirely authoritative in relation to their work:

"the difficulty seems to be that feminists have not yet learnt how the mutual constitution of their gender, class, race, sexuality and so on, affects their production of knowledge. In this she is correct; there are very few analytical tools available to help feminists in this task[...]identities are extraordinarily complex, not only because gender, class, race and sexuality, to name just a few axes of social identity, mediate each other, but also because each of those elements is relational. That is, a sense of self depends on a sense of being different from someone else" (Rose: 1997: 312-316).

Bearing this caveat in mind and recognising that it may not ever be possible to comprehend all of the subtleties of the multiple interactions within a research study, attempts to reflect on positionality in research should not be discarded. I attempt here to reflect on the ways my own positionality influenced the research encounters.

During the interviews I carried out with the women receiving the FSS intervention, I was particularly conscious of the unequal power relations that framed the interview context. This was not only those power relations that are often (although not always) inherent in the research interview, for example, the researcher decides what questions to ask, more or less directs the flow of the conversation, interprets interview material, and decides what and how it should be presented, but that were a consequence of class differences. The stark contrast between my social location and that of the interviewees was plain. Indeed, my education and salary, and the access to social, cultural and material resources that the latter affords, means I can no longer claim to be working class (despite my background) and this stood in contrast to the women I interviewed who all had a relatively low social status - all for instance were unemployed and (those who were not housed in the core) living on low incomes, in deprived neighbourhoods and in poor housing. I tried to reduce this difference (while acknowledging the impossibility of creating a non-hierarchical situation) and develop trust and rapport with the women through various strategies. In so doing, I positioned myself as relatively uninformed with regard to the FSS. I explained that I was there to learn from their expertise as they had the knowledge and experience that I lacked. This began each interview by signalling to the interviewee that she was in a position of power. I also adopted simple strategies of giving consideration to my clothes and I dressed informally and in a way that did not reflect the usual signs of professional status so that I did not appear as an 'authority' figure. I also ensured that the interview was conducted in an informal and flexible manner that allowed women to talk about what was important to them in order to create an atmosphere of respect. A third important factor which appeared to positively influence the rapport within the

interview situation was my attempts to engender a two-way relationship through an element of self-disclosure (Oakley, 1981) where I tried to give something back to the women in return for the information they gave me. This included sharing information about myself, my personal life and my opinions with participants; giving the participants the opportunity to ask questions; and engaging in small talk and humour:

"It becomes clear that, in most cases, the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship" (Oakley, 1981: 41)

Despite the differences that clearly existed between myself and these women, through these strategies we sometimes managed to forge common ground. In one interview this was through our similar experiences of working in a cleaning job (something I had done to earn money following the completion of my first degree) and we exchanged stories as well as tips on cleaning. Through this we laughed together and developed a good rapport.

These strategies seemed to work well with most of the women and encouraged them to elaborate and be forthcoming and I did not encounter any difficulties in arranging subsequent meetings in most cases. Where interviewees did decline a second or third interview this could be plausibly explained as a result of other factors (e.g. one woman had moved from the area and could not be traced) and, from what I could tell, was not a consequence of a negative experience of

the interview process. Indeed, some participants even appeared to find the interview a positive experience.

Only in two interviews did it feel that building a rapport was somewhat more difficult. Charlotte, who appeared to me to be a timid and quiet woman, was willing to participate in three interviews and offered very personal information about herself, often unprompted, but was reticent and reluctant to speak at length in any of our meetings despite my best attempts to put her at ease and encourage further elaboration. I got the impression that she was not entirely comfortable in the situation, seemed a little nervous and may have been worried about saying the wrong thing - she often gave short, sometimes one word, responses and smoked throughout the conversations. As such, these interviews felt less 'successful' as I could not clearly and thoroughly explain what Charlotte thought about the topics we discussed or why. In part, I wondered whether she did not actually want to take part in the research at all but felt pressured or obliged to do so as she would have initially been approached by her project worker with whom she had a good relationship and may have therefore felt a sense of duty. On reflection however, I felt this was unlikely as at the time of the final interview, Charlotte was no longer involved with the project (her case had been closed), I had contacted her directly about meeting again and had given her the opportunity (as I did to all the women) to discontinue her participation in the study. She seemed happy however to continue her involvement. I felt that the less easy rapport was, at least in part, because Charlotte appeared to be a much quieter, somewhat shy and a less self-assured woman generally than some of the other participants. Moreover, perhaps she did not possess the linguistic capital that enabled her to feel at



ease in the interview situation (Bourdieu, 1991). I also concluded, however, that for reasons I found hard to explain, I was not able fill the differences between myself and this interviewee, and had to acknowledge that some interviews are more difficult to conduct and less 'productive' than others for a variety of reasons. This highlights the need to recognise that as researchers we can not always demand "reasoned reasons" from respondents when there may be no such reasons to be given; when the participant may not be able to reflect and provide what is deemed to be a "satisfactory" response (Allen, 2009). This very point highlights the power of the interviewee on whom the success of the interview is dependent (Hoffman, 2007).

After a first interview, which went well, my second interview with Helen was also difficult. Although I had phoned Helen the evening before the interview was scheduled to take place in order to check that she was still happy with the arrangement, when I arrived the next morning Helen was in bed asleep. Although I offered, she did not want to rearrange the interview but got up and came down stairs to talk with me. However, the interview was not a great success due to the location of the interview. I left it up to the women to decide on the location of the interviews and all but one was conducted in the home of the women at their request<sup>13</sup> and this location seemed to work well in most cases. It helped create a relaxed, informal encounter and did not seem to inhibit the interview in any way. In this case, however, the house was very busy with Helen, her husband, two of her children and her two young grandchildren all in the same small room where I was trying to conduct the interview. It was therefore very difficult to engage Helen in a conversation as

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<sup>13</sup> One interview was carried out in a pub near to where the interviewee was living in temporary accommodation after being made homeless.

the house was chaotic and we were surrounded by a great deal of noise and commotion. Moreover, Helen was somewhat preoccupied with trying to tend to her young grandchildren who were in her care at the time. The presence of Helen's teenage children also made the interview difficult as they interrupted persistently and did not allow Helen to fully engage with me. In fact, it was almost impossible to maintain any kind of dialogue. In addition to this, Louise herself appeared to be exhausted and somewhat despondent, probably partly as a result of having only just woken up. The interview proper was short, therefore, and lasted approximately 20 minutes, and I was not able to obtain what I felt was valuable information from Helen.

The other factor that shaped the interviews was the participants' 'emotional' position. Due to the range of subjects that the interviews covered, participants were often asked to delve into their private worlds and this engendered talk of painful, difficult and sometimes harrowing stories, something that I had been ill-prepared for. There were times during interviews therefore when the women became agitated, upset and angry, and expressed acute feelings of sorrow, frustration, guilt, fear and hope. This brought to the fore my ethical responsibility to find ways to not only respond in an appropriate manner, but manage the women's emotions and ensure their emotional well-being was not harmed in any way by the experience or that they did not feel that the interview was a painful or distressing experience. Rather than be indifferent, detached and not responsive to emotional moments for fear of getting 'too close' to the participant or endangering the validity of the response, whenever sensitive and difficult topics were raised by the women I offered comfort and responded as humanly and kindly as possible. Notwithstanding this, when very emotional and

traumatic events were talked about I was careful not to probe on these sensitive subjects, offer any opinion or advice, nor try to solve the participants' problems conscious of the fact that I am not trained to engage in 'therapeutic' conversations which could potentially inflict damage upon an individual (Parr, 1998). This said, I was also careful not to move on too quickly and avoid difficult stories that had great significance for the women and which they wanted to tell, even if the interview subject was moving forward in a direction that was not particularly productive for my own research purposes.

### ***Reflecting on interviews with practitioners***

As already noted, reflexivity is a difficult process (Rose, 1997) and perhaps separating the interviewees into 'practitioners' and 'service users' is, in some ways, a false distinction. However, my experience of interviewing the women supported by the project contrasted greatly to my feelings about the interviews with those individuals who were involved in the delivery and management of the project. In relation to the latter set of interviews, I felt both less apprehension about the interviews and felt that the interviews posed less of a risk to the emotional health of the interviewees. This was for a number of reasons. Firstly, the fact that I was interviewing these individuals in their professional capacity meant the risks to their emotional wellbeing were not as acute in comparison to the interviews with the service users. This was primarily because the interviews did not entail the disclosure of highly personal information. The participants were not asked to delve into their personal lives but rather discuss something related to their professional lives, a focus of conversation that was far less sensitive. That said, I was aware that the project staff in particular may feel that their knowledge and professional competence was under scrutiny. I tried to anticipate and avoid this by emphasising there were no right or wrong answers,

and that all information provided would be anonymised and remain confidential. Secondly, I felt that my background as an academic researcher worked to even out the hierarchy between myself and the interviewees, all of whom could be described as being in middle class, professional occupations and I was used to interacting and dealing with people in positions of (relative) power. Therefore, the differences between myself and the women supported by the FSS appeared to be more acute than those that existed between me and the practitioners/professional interviewees rendering ethical considerations less pronounced.

### ***Reflecting on interviews with local residents***

Three interviews were carried out with local residents who lived in close proximity to the project. These interviews focussed on their views about the location of the core residential unit in their neighbourhood. This was an issue the participants felt strongly about having been actively involved in resisting the establishment of the unit through their active and high profile local residents association. As was the case in the interviews with service users, all three interviews were carried out in the residents' homes at the request of the interviewees. Whereas I experienced some apprehension when interviewing the service users who lived in very deprived and somewhat 'notorious' areas of the city with high crime rates and neighbourhoods that I was unfamiliar with (although my safety was indeed never put at risk), the areas where the residents lived were extremely affluent and I perceived the context as being safe, particularly as this was an area I knew well as my office was located in the same neighbourhood. Furthermore, as the residents (like the service users) were accessed through the project, and while acknowledging that any research context is never risk free, this made me feel at ease with carrying out the



interviews in the residents' homes as I had prior information about the participants.

Interviewing the residents about their perceptions of the core unit were also relatively undemanding in terms of the ethical complexities involved when compared to the interviews with the women service users mainly because these individuals could not be defined as vulnerable. Firstly, the interviewees were all white, middle class, and highly articulate professionals and although there were differences between myself and these participants, in terms of culture, affluence and status, the power differentials between myself (a white, educated, middle class researcher) and them felt less marked. Related to this, I felt that I had credibility with the interviewees by being part of the academic establishment and by being involved in the government-funded evaluation. Mirroring the interviews with practitioners, I felt that my status as a university researcher helped build trust between myself and the interviewees. Secondly, the residents held strong views about the core unit and, as such, seemed eager to share information and their views about the project willingly and this facilitated an easy and open discussion. Finally, the interviewees were all very self-assured and did not appear to be insecure or anxious about the interview. In contrast to the interviews with the women involved with the FSS, I did not feel that the participants were put at any significant degree of risk through their involvement in the research or through the issues I wanted to talk about. Indeed, there were no questions that I felt uncomfortable asking nor any that it seemed the participants did not want to answer. I did not ask them nor did they feel the need to divulge personal information about themselves. As such, in contrast to interviews with the service users, there were no points during these

interviews when the participants became upset or emotional. Related to this, these particular participants were not people whose perceptions and experiences are not often heard. In this context, it seemed that the interviewees were quite clear what their involvement in the research entailed and did not expect or require the research to have any significant benefit for them. They had already made their opinions known to a range of locally powerful actors including the LA, police and MPs and had been pivotal in influencing how the core unit was managed.

### **Data Analysis and theory generation**

All of the interviews undertaken as part of the research were tape recorded and transcribed. This section focuses attention on how the transcribed interviews were then analysed and, in turn, how theory was generated from these data. Critical realism has primarily been occupied with philosophical issues and largely abstract discussions, and there has been less focus on how to actually carry out empirical research. Derek Layder's (1998) 'adaptive theory' however is an approach (based in critical realism) for developing and elaborating theory in conjunction with ongoing empirical research and I drew on this in my analysis of the interview transcripts and in generating theoretical assumptions.

In case study research, the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data is often driven by grounded theory. Grounded theory is founded on a belief that theory must emerge from data as it is collected and analysed as part of the research process such that theory is located in participant's worlds (Layder, 1998; Letherby, 2003.,2002). While critical realists would fully accept that theory should be grounded in data, they reject the idea that research can be

completely inductive and so seek to make explicit the theoretical grounding of the study. The critical realist method for theory construction therefore is neither purely inductive nor deductive. It does not involve the simple application of an existing theory in order to fit it to the empirical data, nor does theory emerge solely from concrete data (Wei-chung Yeung, 1997). Rather, the approach attempts to combine an emphasis on prior theoretical ideas and models that feed into and guide research while at the same time attending to the generation of theory from the ongoing analysis of data (Layder 1998). This approach brings with it a "context dependent use of theory" (Dobson, 2001): "this essentially realist perspective argues that the selection of theory should be based in the 'reality' of the research situation" (Dobson, 2001: 261). The term "adaptive" is used by Layder (1989) as it implies that the theory adapts to and is shaped by emerging evidence at the same time as the data themselves are filtered through and adapted to relevant and available theoretical 'materials'. Following Layder (1998), this thesis acknowledges and controls the inputs of prior theory rather than trying to remove them. It regards the theories viewed in Chapters Three and Four, therefore, as 'interim products' that have guided the analysis but that demand revision in light of empirical evidence.

A critical realist framework also departs from the inductive, grounded theory method on the basis that it has an over-reliance on data collected directly from concrete social phenomena. For critical realists, although concepts and meanings are necessary for an actors' explanation of their situation, they are likely to not only be flawed but may misrepresent certain aspects of what happens (Sayer, 2000). Indeed, social actors may be unable to explain objectively and to account fully for their action, for instance, when social actors

are constrained and bound by social structures, and the conceptual tools and discursive resources available to them in their culture which provide them with ways of interpreting their circumstances (Sayer, 1990; Skeggs, 1994). Moreover, while people are always knowledgeable about their conduct, they can never carry total awareness of the entire set of potential consequences of their action (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). As such, research participant's experiences, or the things they say, while important and of value in themselves, may not provide reliable grounds for knowledge claims about relationships and structures (Skeggs, 1994). Furthermore, it is argued that social reality is not just composed of individuals' meanings; individual reasoning or intention is only one mechanism within a wider process of causes, for example, social positions, norms and rules, and consequences (Layder, 1998; Danermark *et al*, 1997). However, information regarding these is not always obtainable directly from individual interviews. Thus, critical realists suggest, it is not enough just to collect and repeat the interpretations and explanations that people themselves have of various phenomena - there would be no need for social science if explanations were self-explanatory. For critical realists, it is necessary for the researcher to sometimes 'elevate' herself from the data to gain a broader understanding. Letherby (2002) describes this as involving the 'interpretation', not just 'description' of interviewees analytical processes. Moreover, it is researchers' access to more information (theoretical and experiential or data) than respondents are likely to have, which allows them to adjudicate between accounts:

"I have access to more narratives of experience and more interpretative tools than my respondents and I have also been



“given” more time to think and particularly to theorise about these issues than many of the people I spoke and wrote to. My presentation is filtered through my understandings, but at the same time I have made a self-conscious attempt to understand my respondents’ understandings in their own terms” (Letherby, 2002:5.3).

In my research, the analytical process started with the data in transcript form. The process of 'coding', understood as the indexing and linking of elements of data that are perceived as sharing some commonality, was then carried out manually and using text management tools in Word (rather than with the aid of a computer software package such as Nvivo). Initially, the data was coded in a non-exclusive indexing process in order to avoid selection at an early stage and so as to include all the points/issues raised by the participants. However, rather than code line by line, data which was theoretically pertinent was targeted to avoid a large amount of codes that were irrelevant for my purpose. Many of the categories were derived from 'theoretical baggage' and assumptions about the substantive area (Layder, 1989: 57) acquired through my prior reading as discussed in Chapters Three and Four (See Appendix Three). Following Layder (1989), theoretical ideas or 'orienting concepts' were valued as a means of giving focus to the data analysis process. Orienting concepts, somewhat independent from the specific research, are abstract ideas, representations or symbols derived from existing bodies of knowledge and are used to both 'crank-start' the process of theory development and, with that, provide a 'route into' the interpretation and analysis of data. They are a means of bringing provisional order to the interview data. The six orienting concepts that guided my analysis

were: Local politics/decision-making; the role of the state; governmental rationalities; technologies of intervention; expertise and agency; impact on families. These acted as an appropriate point of departure. This more provisional or pre-coding was then abstracted into 'themes' or conceptual categories that acted as a 'core' or central code around which other 'satellite' categories (or subsidiary concepts) were clustered (Layder, 1989). During the analytical process, I discarded some orienting concepts and retained and developed others. Some codes emerged directly out of the empirical data as a result of scrutiny of the transcripts.

In my analysis I tried to represent the voices of my respondents (particularly the women receiving the intervention) and I valued their 'stories': I listened to their self-conceptions and the meanings they attached to the FSS interventions in their lives. I selected extracts from the interview transcripts that, for me, were most salient for the purposes of answering my research questions. In so doing, some respondents had more to 'say' than others and so they have appeared more often in my 'findings'. Moreover, I did not always necessarily accept their accounts as straightforward 'evidence' but sought to reconstitute interviewees' experiences through sociological conceptualisation and theorising. As already noted above, my aim was not simply to document participant's experiences. This means that I have taken the accounts of my interviewees and analysed them according to my political, personal and intellectual perspective (Letherby, 2002., 2003). In turn, I had the final say in deciding what participants' experiences revealed and I acknowledge that this thesis represents my, not my respondents, interpretations. It is important to emphasise, however, that 'my'

interpretation is one that has emerged out of an engagement with the collective knowledge of a community of experts (Edwards and Sheptycki, 2009).

This position is driven by a critical realist anti-relativism which suggests that not all accounts are equal and as researchers, with access to more narratives of experience, theoretical explanations and interpretive tools, while not being intellectual superior, we may be intellectually privileged and this enables a critique of accounts (Letherby, 2003.,2002). Letherby (2002: 4.4) suggests that this is "a right to be regarded as a knower in a way that respondents do not have". On account of this approach to the analysis, I chose not to involve respondents in interpreting and (re)writing the findings of this thesis, nor did I take the finalised thesis findings back to them for 'verification'. This is not because my respondents were a wholly subordinated or subjected mass who require 'de-programming' and 'bringing to truth' (Clarke, 2004b), nor do I believe that I have produced something that respondents would not recognise at all. However, my conclusions may represent a fragmented representation of my respondents' lives, may stand in opposition to their accounts or may be viewed as inaccurate. Furthermore, participation can be undertaken on what are described as "stigmatising terms": that is, the acceptance by participants of a disempowered identity or social location. Some participants may have been reluctant, for instance, to see themselves as vulnerable (in the way I have described them) or subject to punitive sanction and their participation could have actually further disempowered those in need and could have had a detrimental impact on the relationship between the families and the FSS (Taylor, 2005). I acknowledge that this leaves me supporting an approach which may involve a less than complete representation of my participant's views

and which may not challenge power relationships between researcher and participant. However, I believe this approach is necessary if research is to make authoritative claims, have implications for policy and not be concerned solely with issues of accurate representation rather than 'reality' itself. My thesis is a social scientific truth-claim but one that is fallible and, like the viewpoints of my respondents, open to public scrutiny, criticism and corroboration. It also acknowledges the limitations of academic expertise

"The simultaneous utility and weakness of expertise are at issue.

Experts may be best placed to decide matters of fact, but on their own they may not be the best placed to make value judgements about the use of that knowledge. Because the lay public are not limited by the paradigmatic strictures of expert communities, they may paradoxically be better placed to make crucial judgements about what is to be done with the products of expert knowledge, but are less able to interpret those knowledge claims" (Edwards and Sheptycki, 2009: 5).

## **Conclusion**

This thesis is based on qualitative case study research aimed at analysing the development and implementation of an intensive family support project designed to reduce ASB among families who are homeless or at risk of eviction from social housing on account of their conduct. The field work undertaken in the case study project, the FSS, had a dual purpose since it also formed part of a broader Government-funded evaluation which facilitated my doctoral



research. The insights produced in this thesis could not have been reached under other circumstances. The chapter has set out how, despite being based, to some degree, on the same data as that which informed the reports arising from the formal evaluation (Nixon *et al*, 2006a, 2006b, 2008), the thesis looks at the data differently by not only situating it theoretically but by asking questions that were not posed in the evaluation. The chapter has also explored how the thesis has tried to be sensitive to issues of power and control throughout the research process. In so doing, it has provided a discussion of the practical and ethical issues that emerged during the process of conducting the interviews: "ethics in practice". This is in recognition of the contextually located knowledge-production process at the heart of the interview encounter and is intended to produce 'accountable knowledge'. The chapter has also been explicit with regard to the way in which critical realism has given rise to a particular way of 'seeing' and 'hearing' during the data analysis processes. Although I do not claim to have uncovered 'the truth' about intensive family support, I do claim to have produced a rigorous and accurate but contextualised understanding.

The following three chapters report on the thesis' research findings.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Politics, Partnerships and Power: What social forces have shaped the FSS?**

#### **Introduction**

This is the first chapter of three that discuss the findings arising from my analysis of the empirical data collected for the purposes of the thesis. Chapter Six focuses analytical attention on the power relations, institutional arrangements and political interests that gave the FSS momentum and shaped the nature of the intervention. This geo-historical explanation entails, firstly, a concern with the policy making process and the conditions of existence within which the FSS materialised. Such an analysis means taking account of the multiple determinations that gave rise to the policy 'problem' and the subsequent response at the local level (Jacobs *et al*, 2003; Sayer, 2000). In so doing, attention is paid to the key role that certain local interest groups played in influencing the project, in particular the local ALMO, social services and local residents. The chapter also considers the degree of power held by central and local state actors. The analysis that follows draws primarily on interviews with project management staff, the lead officer in the LA and actors working with the project at a strategic level, essentially local policy and decision makers. With these broad aims in mind, the following research questions have guided the analysis in this chapter:

- In what local political context was the project established?

- What 'problem' was the FSS designed to address?
- What role did different local actors play in determining the direction of the FSS?
- What was the role of the local and central state?
- What was the influence of non-state agents of government?

#### **In what local political context was the project established?**

The FSS was initially established as part of a local governance regime and did not represent the local implementation of an ASB central policy. Rather, the stimulus for the development of the project was the LA's requirement to reduce repeat homeless applications. The local 'problem' that was identified was one of repeat cycles of homelessness of a certain 'type' of family characterised as having multiple support needs which required a sustainable solution.

In 2002, in a context of rising homeless presentations and in preparation for the publication of the council's first five year Homelessness Strategy, the council's Strategy Manager in this policy area undertook a review of the range of local provision to prevent homelessness. Part of this remit included a focus on the repeat homelessness of families, particularly those in danger of being found intentionally homeless and not being offered accommodation sometimes because of their own or their children's behaviour. These families were repeatedly traversing the homelessness route with the deleterious consequences that brings with it, such as family breakdown. Moreover, it was acknowledged that while some of these families were often known to a range of agencies, support was either piecemeal or non-existent, and also deemed to not be effective:

"it was around these families that we were, you know, constantly having contact with, who were homeless, they were moving around, they were causing a lot of trouble in the local areas, there was a lot of resources being thrown at them but it wasn't really, it was everybody, it was kind of piecemeal and a lot of the children were ending up either on the child protection register and or in the care system and I think it was an attempt to address some of that in a way that not only dealt with the housing situation, with the anti-social behaviour situation but also with a type of preventative approach"

(Social services manager)

The housing service's policy response was formulated during the period that the *Supporting People* programme<sup>14</sup> was being introduced through the Transitional Housing Benefit<sup>15</sup> fund. In April 2002, a bid was made by the Health and Housing Team<sup>16</sup> within the LA to the ODPM Homeless Fund for set up costs for a service built on the model of the Dundee Family Project, a service which LA staff were aware of and had visited for information and guidance. This policy response was said to reflect a political culture within the housing service and a professional habitus that embraced an orientation towards a welfare ethos for vulnerable families. The Health and Housing Development Manager explained how, since the mid 90s, the council had come to recognise that many

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<sup>14</sup> This was a new Governmental initiative aimed at changing the way supported housing services are planned, delivered and funded, led by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

<sup>15</sup> Transitional Housing Benefit and Supporting People Programme money are one and the same thing. In order to help councils get ready for the introduction of the Supporting People Programme a scheme called Transitional Housing Benefit (THB) was put in place from April 2000. THB allowed charges for housing support to be calculated and paid for through the Housing Benefits system until April 2003 when the Supporting People Programme commenced.

<sup>16</sup> The Health and Housing Team are located within the 'Neighbourhoods and Community Care' Directorate. The Team provide information, advice, and support for people who have specific housing needs related to a health condition or disability



households required support to help them sustain a tenancy and, in instances of homelessness, to retain a tenancy when they move from interim accommodation into permanent accommodation. In response, a multi-agency panel and a range of tenancy support services had been developed in the city. These included generic support through neighbourhood-based schemes, support to refugees and specialist intervention for homeless families through Shelter Homeless to Home and the Domestic Abuse Floating Support Scheme.

The development of the project was driven from the beginning by the LA Health and Housing Development Manager in partnership with social services who were involved in putting the bid together with the intention to contract out the project to the voluntary sector. However, the 'set up' grant was not made available until December 2002 with a three month time frame in which to establish the service. The decision was therefore taken to keep the project 'in-house' and the FSS became operational in March 2003.

#### **What 'problem' was the FSS designed to address?**

As noted already, initially, the policy problem, one of repeat homelessness, was not explicitly identified as being about ASB, it had broader social, as opposed to criminal, policy objectives. In fact, at the time, the ASB agenda in the City was very much focussed on developing and embedding policies and procedures for enforcement measures (for example, ASBOs) to address ASB, reflecting the dominant focus at a national level. The City's formal strategy for tackling ASB was not fully developed until around a year later in January 2004, after it was appointed a 'Trailblazer' for developing excellence in dealing with nuisance neighbours:

“...it came out of the homeless agenda. The ASB agenda at the time was busy setting up the new framework for dealing with ASBOs, the, the kind of work on estates, you know the neighbourhood warden type schemes, the, in a way, the way, the sort of more enforcement type responses, because that wasn’t, that was quite new as well”  
(LA lead officer-01).

While never initially being designed with the primary purpose of reducing incivility, the project did, however, evolve into a service designed specifically to address problems of ASB. Echoing work referred to in Chapter Four, which draws attention to complex and multiple determinants of policy (Burney 2005; Hawarth and Manzi 1999; Jacobs *et al*, 2003), this demonstrates how the project, and its ultimate terms of reference, was contingently forged within the space of local power struggles to make the project strategically necessary. Interviews with the LA lead officer and others involved in the instantiation of the project, revealed how a formal discourse constructed about the project was one that shifted from being about preventing homelessness and addressing the causes underlying repeat homelessness *per se*, to one concerned with controlling deviance.

When first conceived, the project was designed to target a group of families who were defined as being “vulnerable” and “chaotic” where issues such as child protection concerns, criminal behaviour, substance misuse and domestic violence may be prevalent, but who “may *not* be committing ASB”. However, the LA lead officer responsible for devising the project was aware of a need to

"embed" the project at a LA level and she recognised the central importance of establishing a new 'convincing narrative' (Jacobs *et al*, 2003) to frame the FSS and on which to build institutional support. This is a "necessary" part of the policy making process and one which may result in policy swinging from one extreme to another as one vested interest gains dominance over the discursive space, or a compromise between conflicting interests (Jacobs *et al*, 2003). The alternative government rationality embraced by the FSS led to the project being framed by a discourse of ASB prevention in recognition of the political gains of publicising the project within a particular, more victim-centred, discourse. This was described by the LA lead officer as an attempt to "badge it" in the language of housing management, one increasingly suffused with crime prevention concerns (Flint, 2006).

The LA lead officer's housing services background rendered her somewhat 'predisposed' (Jessop, 2001) to pursue this particular policy narrative as she was not only acutely aware of the LA housing service's responsibilities to support vulnerable, homeless families, but also their duties to ensure the concerns of other residents in 'the community' are met through housing management responsibilities to deal with 'problem' tenants. Moreover, she accepted the reality of ASB and the detrimental impact it has, and therefore empathised with those complaining about those families who are homeless or at risk of eviction on grounds of ASB. Thus, while there was a recognition that there are many vulnerable families at risk of homelessness that do not commit ASB, a decision was taken to develop the service through the lens of ASB in order to grant the project institutional support in the LA:

"I think very, very early on, the thinking wasn't, this is an ASB project. I think, the thinking was this is a families project. I think our thinking changed to say, 'no we have to embed this, this must be embedded in the anti-social behaviour strategy', it wasn't from the very early days" (LA lead officer-01)

"the kind of profile we have now...was not what we initially set out, it was to a degree in that we were targeting families who were challenging, who were coming through the services over and over again and who were committing anti-social behaviour but it was still seen from a prevention of homelessness priority...it was about tackling the root causes basically of homelessness, child protection proceedings and some of the root and, and anti-social behaviour although their behaviour to a degree was, is a kind of symptom of the other things...[now] we're much more seen as an anti-social behaviour project and with additional outcomes of homeless prevention and child protection, rather than the other way round" (LA lead officer-02)

As such, as it evolved, the FSS came to be crafted in a way that defined it as a service targeted at families at risk of eviction *specifically* on the basis of alleged ASB. In turn, it became a project primarily about ASB rather than homelessness.

Interviewees agreed that it was contingent whether the project might at one point have been devised without the emphasis on ASB and instead through the



lens of welfare need. However, it was felt that such a narrative would not have given the project stability and support as it did not resonate strongly enough with central state policy agendas at the time. Even when framed as being concerned with the prevention of ASB, the project was initially seen by many in the LA as being new, experimental and somewhat controversial, in a context where, at a national level, the focus was increasingly on a tough approach to dealing with ASB. As such, the project risked being seen as a 'soft' option underpinned by a conception of 'perpetrators' which was at odds with other local and central government policies. As such, not all LA departments and actors supported the development of the project and there was opposition from certain departments within the council. The project did manage to garner institutional support, however, through collaboration with its main partner agency, social services. The LA lead officer, with the support of the Executive Director of Social Services, worked together to make the project politically acceptable to a range of different partner agencies which, in part (as already noted above), entailed framing the project in a 'tough love' language:

"I think it was seen as something separate and a bit challenging and, and there was a nervousness, because once you start having a service that actually is saying, 'Well, look at this family. There are some pretty serious root causes to why they're behaving like this, there are some pretty vulnerable people within these families', and once you stop looking at them as just a problem, then you start questioning things like, why should we be splashing children's faces on the local newspaper and doing these things? And that that's where conflicts arise because that, that's the policy of the council's,

to be tough. So we've had to find a position where we are working consistently to challenge behaviour and to effect a change, and we've had to prove ourselves, even internally, we've had to prove our worth" (LA lead officer-01).

Despite some scepticism from within the LA, there was enough support from some senior officers working at a strategic level to ensure the FSS materialised and this was seen to be, in part, due to the city having an approach to ASB which focused not only on enforcement but also on early intervention, evidenced by the relatively large number of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) used in the City when compared to the level of ASBOs issued. Due to internal conflicts at a LA level, however, for a long time the FSS was not part of the council's strategic ASB service, as housing was represented by the (enforcement focused) ASB team. It only become part of the ASB Strategy Group when £40,000 of Trailblazer funding was made available to the council in 2005 specifically for supporting parenting and it was decided that FSS should take the lead in providing parenting courses. According to the LA lead officer, it was at this time, as the ASB agenda was beginning to shift away from a straightforward enforcement led approach to a focus on parenting, that the council began to think that "we'd be useful" (LA lead officer-02). However, it was the later Respect Agenda that reportedly gave the project a "push" (see below).

**What role did different local actors play in determining the direction of the FSS?**

### ***Professional Habitus***

Within the field of crime control and community safety, attention has been drawn to the role of local professional habitus (Stenson, 2005; Hughes, 2007) in determining how crime and safety issues are translated into policy and political action. The FSS was strategically located within housing services as part of the LA 'Neighbourhoods and Community Care' directorate. Members of project staff as well as the LA lead officer were from a range of professional backgrounds but predominantly from housing-related services including ASB teams, housing management, tenancy support workers, and homelessness officers:

"You know, we have some staff from housing background, some staff from social work backgrounds and I don't know if it's my influence but since we started I've recruited three tenancy support workers and two of them are from housing and anti-social behaviour team, and I don't if that's who I just naturally meet and think "yes, that's who I want" (Project Manager#1).

It became clear through interviews with staff, that the knowledge base and professional values/culture of the staff shaped the project in key ways. Indeed, as noted above, the decision to "embed" the project within the ASB policy narrative was, in part, a result of the lead officer's understanding of and empathy with this agenda due to her professional background in housing. The influence of the professional identity of the FSS management was also

discernable in regard to how the nature of the intervention was (at least discursively) constructed. Drawing on material from interviews carried out before the government rhetoric around a 'twin-track' approach had become established, the project was described as one committed to the use of enforcement measures where necessary for the purpose of protecting residents (this governmental rationality is discussed in detail in Chapter Seven). In the quote below, this was contrasted to the approach taken by similar projects, also designed to reduce ASB but set up and managed by the then charity NCH (now Action for Children) whereby the focus of the project was perceived to be the family. This was directly related to the management staff's previous work experience in the housing sector:

"you work in a homeless service, you make hard decisions and so, you know, when it came to evicting the families I didn't lose any sleep over it and NCH would because it's not in their aim as an objective as a charity and I can see where they're coming from. So for them to, they've wanted to badge what they're doing within their own sort of language but for us we've wanted to badge it within our own language. You know a big part of Housing is you go out to public meetings in the community where you've got Councillors and, and local people saying, 'What are you doing about anti-social behaviour on our estates? Why aren't you doing this and why aren't you doing that?' So to go out there and say to them, 'Well actually we're providing this lovely support service.' 'Oh so money's going into them, what about us the victims, we're not...' you know" (LA lead officer-01).



Furthermore, the first FSS project manager explained that her desire to manage the FSS was driven by what she perceived as the failure of other agencies to deal adequately with families accused of causing ASB. She felt that other agencies had been too lenient in their attempts to work with such families and that a more "assertive" approach was required, one that recognised the rights of the victims and "challenged" the family:

"My background is housing, I've not really had any support work experience...I was managing the teams that dealt with ASB from the enforcement side and I'd seen all about this service and I thought it was quite interesting and I felt quite strongly about the fact that, because I've come across support agencies in the past that I feel don't do the best for their clients because they just do everything that their clients want them to do and I thought that it was really important that somebody was in there who had a strong understanding of the ASB framework and was ready to sort of challenge people rather than just hold their hand" (Project Manager#1).

***The role of 'partner' agencies in determining the nature of the intervention***

Interviews with project staff and local actors in different organisations also sought to explore the nature and impact of the relationships between the project and other local agencies. This entailed an examination of the power relationships that existed between partner agencies; the tensions and dilemmas that arose from inter-agency working; and how these power dynamics are manifest in the structure of the project.

It is important to note that partnership working is a necessary condition of the FSS for a number of reasons: Firstly, it is reliant on a range of organisations/agencies to refer families to the project; secondly, it seeks to enlist the support of a range of agencies to provide services to families; thirdly, it requires professionals to invest in the governance of the project by attending multi-agency panels including family review meetings, the steering group and the admissions panel; and, fourthly, it relies on the provision of information about families/family members for the assessment of families' support needs and the formulation of support plans. This said, no agencies were formally compelled to collaborate with the project, rather, engagement was voluntary and there was some recognition that good relationships between agencies were dependent on the commitment of certain individuals. Moreover, it was also recognised that 'buy-in' from agencies did not simply reflect altruistic or professional support for the aims of the project, but was determined by self-interest: the project acted as a vehicle through which other departments or organisations could meet their own targets and strategic objectives:

"...from a housing point of view they have happy neighbours, you know, and if the communities are happy cause we've gone in there and done it, then it's [FSS] high up on their agenda. From a youth offending team point of view, we can work with youth offending team officers to do meaningful activities and to try and get kids to sorta lessen their crime" (Project Manager#2).

This reflects Stenson's (2002) point that the outcome of partnership working is 'contingently necessary' because, although it is possible to identify necessary causes of partnership activity, the apprehension and manipulation of these relations is a contingent facet of political agency.

Through exploring the contingent outcome of partnership working in the case study, it became clear that partnership working within the FSS does not take the form of a network of private, public and voluntary sector organisations. Rather, the project is very much in the hands of public authorities and, in particular, the LA, with social services, the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) that manages the council's stock of social housing, the Youth Offending Team (YOT), the homeless department, and the police identified as those most 'actively' engaged with and supportive of the project. As is often the case in many multi-agency services designed to address crime or ASB, education (schools, the LEA, education welfare officers) and health organisations/professionals had reportedly been more difficult to collaborate with, deeming the issue of ASB to be outwith their 'core business'. It was apparent, however, that agencies involved with the project were not equal partners in terms of the power they possessed to shape the project. There was essentially a hierarchy of agency involvement with housing and social services at the top, both clearly having most influence over the project. The relations with these agencies is described in some detail below:

### ***Relations with the ALMO***

As already noted, the project was essentially 'housing-led' in terms of the professional background and habitus of the project staff involved and because of its positioning within the LA's 'housing services' department. It could be said

that an 'asymmetrical' necessary relation exists between the ALMO and the project: while the ALMO was not dependent on the project, the project was dependent on the ALMO. Indeed, the project was aimed at preventing eviction/homelessness and so necessarily required a working relationship with the main social housing provider. Therefore securing the ALMO's support for the project was crucial for its success. This was achieved, in part, it was felt, due to the professional identity of the project staff. According to those interviewed, the housing management background of the project staff meant that they were perceived to possess an instinctive empathy with the strategic priorities and concerns of housing organisations, which gave rise to the project's 'twin track' (a combination of 'support' and 'enforcement') approach said to underpin the strategy of intervention. Given the project's strategic positioning within the council, when it was set up, staff also had ready-established networks with housing practitioners in the ALMO and, importantly, their in-house ASB team, as well as housing-related local government services including the homeless section. Together, these factors enabled the project management team to easily build relationships of trust with the local ALMO whose support the project needed to secure as the organisation would inevitably be a major source of referrals to the project:

"we've always worked along side our enforcement team because we've had a close working relationship with the Anti-social Behaviour Team because that's where we're from, we're from Housing and they're from Housing and we've had to have good relationships with those. We understand the issues of managing tenancies and of community expectations of you



managing tenancies so that has always been there in our consciousness because that's where we've come from really" (LA lead officer-02).

The manager of the ALMO's ASB team was supportive of the project from the beginning, largely, she suggested, as a result of her background in social work which meant that she was fully aware of some of the wider factors associated with families' disruptive behaviour which housing management tools (e.g. eviction) often fail to address. This also helped the project garner support within the ALMO and there was a willingness within the ASB team to utilise the project as one of its "tools" for addressing ASB, particularly in cases where housing officers could identify that a family was in need of and willing to accept support to address issues thought to be associated with the behaviour that had drawn them to the attention of the ASB unit:

"I was really enthusiastic and that was basically as a result of I suppose my background from Social Services and work I did there for a number of families in a similar sort of situation" (ASB team manager).

The project therefore provided a welcome option for housing officers within the ALMO as an alternative to legal action, particularly since many cases where families may be in need of support, were described as not qualifying for social work intervention;

"...you sometimes have a dilemma 'cause you see a family that's in need. You see the anti-social behaviour, you see, you see the people who are complaining and you see that, obviously, there's issues there and you've got to address those issues. But the only powers we have are, you know, quite sort of draconian sort of, it's, you know the sort of devastating powers really for people when we say they're losing their home and that, and to have the FSS as an alternative to offer families that you see are in need and need the support rather than the punishment that we sort of dish out is, is great for me. I feel better for doing that" (ASB officer#1-01).

However, members of the ALMO's ASB team, who deal with the more serious cases of ASB, usually where formal and/or enforcement action is deemed to be necessary, did suggest how tensions can arise as a result of an antagonism between the aims of the ASB team and those of FSS such that they were described as sometimes "working at a tangent":

"You know, they're trying to keep them in a property, whereas we're wanting to kinda push it on and I think a couple of times we've said 'actually we need to take some action' and they're kinda like 'no way'... (ASB officer#1-01).

The quote above is in reference to cases where a family being supported by the FSS continues to be the subject of complaints of ASB. In such cases, it is suggested that a conflict of interests can occur due to the FSS's main priority which is to help families avoid eviction and the ASB team's remit to take action

against families who are persistently the cause of ASB complaints, which might include eviction proceedings. In resolving such cases, however, it was felt that the professional identity of the FSS staff eased negotiations around the appropriate course of action. Housing officers were willing to take on board their concerns as FSS staff were felt to understand and sympathise with the priorities of the ASB team. Indeed, the two organisations were not seen to have opposing agendas such that FSS prioritises the needs of the alleged 'perpetrators' over and above the interests of the 'victims' or those reporting ASB. This meant that the intervention of FSS in a number of cases had resulted in planned legal action by the ASB team being averted or at least deferred. In some instances, however, the project had encouraged the ASB team to take alternative enforcement against a family, rather than seek the abandonment of enforcement action altogether. This reflected the finding discussed above that the project adopted a 'twin track' approach in which staff fully support enforcement action where it was deemed to be necessary:

"I had a meeting with them [FSS] the other week and so obviously told them of our intentions, you know, we are looking at whether or not an eviction was appropriate and to start with I was like, 'yeah, I think we should' and then obviously I was speaking to the support worker, we just discussed it and we thought maybe ASBO's might be better" (ASB officer#1-01).

The FSS did not, therefore, represent a resistance to enforcement as a means to tackling ASB and did not, therefore, offer a wholesale alternative way of dealing with 'problem families' that ensured families were not subject to punitive

action. On the contrary they sometimes conspired with the ALMO to implement and enforce legal actions.

The ALMO were, therefore, less apprehensive of working closely with the FSS than they might have been had the project been staffed by, for instance, social workers or YOT officers, who were assumed to prioritise the needs of the individual:

“...it’s very judgemental but coming from a Housing background it’s more focussed because the behaviour is affecting other people, whereas from Social Services the focus would be on the individual and not the affect on the wider community perhaps as much...So that’s why I think the focus is different and it’s very unfair to say that and I can understand why Social Services are like that, they’re looking at the welfare of the individual...and that’s why I think it sits better here, we’re coming at it from the welfare of the individual but the responsibility we have to the wider community, so we temper a bit of both and I suppose that’s because of our responsibility as a landlord” (ASB team manager).

“...you tend to find like Youth Offending Team, see an anti-social behaviour order as something that would constrain them and they could help in a different way, social services the same, but I always see it as just another tool really to try and stop them doing what they’re doing. So I think you do find that other agencies, because they’ve got different remit, obviously Youth Offending Team want to



keep kids out of trouble and out of prison where as we're quite happy to take action on them if, if it's necessary" (ASB officer#2-01).

Notwithstanding this, there seemed to be a high degree of inter-organisational trust in the City between all agencies and well established partnership working infrastructures that seemed to help avoid conflict between agencies. For instance, interviewees suggested that any disagreements over potential legal action were usually agreed by majority voting in multi-agency meetings e.g. ASBO panels:

"we'll go round the room everybody will say what they're doing with the family currently and how it's going and then we will take a decision on whether we feel that an ASBO would be necessary or not. So obviously everybody will be able to say what they think and you normally tend to go with the majority" (ASB officer#1-01).

### ***The relationship with social services***

The other most influential partner agency was said to be social services. Social services played a key role in the project's evolution from the beginning. As noted above, they were involved in putting together the original bid for government funding by providing important input on the 'support' side of the project's alleged 'twin-track' approach. This was required because the project staff's professional backgrounds in housing meant that, although they were familiar with the targeted 'client group', they possessed limited knowledge about children/family support policy or practice. The social services manager therefore played a key role in advising the management staff, identifying the

client group and, in the early days, providing seconded staff<sup>17</sup>. Moreover, social workers tended to be involved with the majority of families referred to the project which meant that project workers attend children in need or child protection case conferences as well as liaise with social services when developing support plans to ensure that the work of the two agencies does not overlap.

The incentives for social services to establish a partnership with FSS were made clear during an interview with the social services manager who sits on the FSS steering group and the project's admission panel. He readily acknowledged that his interest in the project was driven not by a primary concern with the prevention of ASB but by child protection concerns. He explained that in the current political context, social services have insufficient resources that limit the number of families they can support at any one time. He also drew attention to the way in which this has worked to narrow social services' focus to the single issue of child protection. Moreover, the amount of time social workers can devote to monitoring and assessing the safety of a child is limited meaning that enforcement action is sometimes taken as a precautionary step:

"...talking about a particular family and they [project staff] were saying 'and they've had social worker involvement for 15 years and nothing's changed'. I was trying to explain that the issues that they have had social work involvement for were around child protection, were around neglect issues and as the children have got older, the boys, the two boys had become involved in anti-social behaviour. So

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<sup>17</sup> The staff seconded from social services were pulled out after a very short time due to social services needing them back in their core services.

to actually make the correlation between Social Services being involved for that length of time and there had been no impact on anti-social behaviour, it was comparing apples and pears 'cause we weren't actually there to do that" (Social Services Manager).

Given these financial restraints, the social services manager explained that the FSS very much acts as an additional resource for social services. He suggested had the FSS not been involved with some families, social workers might well have been compelled to take more intrusive and punitive measures through a childcare route. As such, he claimed that FSS acts as an invaluable partner to social workers in their efforts to prevent children being taken into care. Project workers were described as providing an additional "plank of monitoring" who, in comparison to social workers, can spend more time with families observing them and can alert social services to any child protection concerns they may identify:

"I know that's a tension with the FSS because sometimes we're, you know, the, it can appear that we're wanting to just refer the families where there are real child protection concerns or who are at risk of going into care proceedings and they're supporting and gonna monitor this. And I think that, there is a tension there because we do want this additional monitoring and we do want more people going in to see these families and making sure that there are people there who could alert us to concerns that they've got" (Social Services Manager).

As the quote above infers, the social work manager and the LA lead officer acknowledged that the agendas of social services and the project had come into conflict in the beginning as social services attempted to appropriate the service for their own purposes – to refer cases to the FSS in order to allow social workers to withdraw contact or enable additional surveillance. This caused problems since, not only did the *Supporting People* money funding the project prohibit the FSS from carrying out work directly with children and young people, but the complexity of the cases were beyond the ability of project staff, most untrained in social care, to deal with:

“I think the view of Social Services was, ‘well you’ve got all this Supporting People money, you can deal with these families now, we don’t need to worry about them. It’s a solution’. But the reality of it was, it wasn’t a solution because we were prohibited through our funding streams to do some of the work we needed to do. There came a point in year one, where I was certainly saying, ‘no, this isn’t right, we cannot do this’...we were thinking, no, we need to really re-evaluate what we set up to do” (LA lead office-01)

“there was a family that had been referred from one of the south east teams and it was clearly a family where those children should not have been with, with the parents. We should’ve been initiating care proceedings and our care plan should’ve been those children living away from home. And what had happened was they’d been referred to the FSS. And obviously it was causing consternation and concern at the panel, I very quickly pulled that back and got in touch



with the team manager and said 'this is not, the, the staff aren't in a position to do this level of work with this family and the concerns are so great we need to be doing, doing something else with them' (Social services manager).

It was felt that this tension had since been resolved and that the project sought to select cases for intervention where there may be *both* child protection concerns and complaints about ASB:

"...it's whether you take the heavy-end cases where there's a clear bit around prevention of care, 'cause I'm a social worker through and through so that kind of thing is what my radar would be alert to, but then you've also got to balance that with the, the clear brief around anti-social behaviour and I think we pretty much get the balance right" (Social Services Manager).

Although there was a feeling that more 'appropriate' cases were now being referred to, and accepted by, the FSS, a feeling prevailed that the FSS was acting as an additional arm of social services. Although the social work manager interviewed explained how it is necessary to ensure that the work of the two organisations complement each other to avoid any duplication of effort, a view was clearly expressed by project staff that they were effectively undertaking social work 'on the cheap'. Where social workers are providing a non-statutory service there was a view amongst project staff that social services are often keen to withdraw their support completely due to the pressures of high case loads and limited resources. In other cases, where social services have a

statutory responsibility to retain involvement, project workers suggested that social workers tend to visit less frequently with the assurance that monitoring is being carried out by project staff. This meant that project workers are effectively left providing (unqualified) social work support to families:

“...if there's definite child protection, you know, the children are registered then there's no question Social Services withdrawing because we're involved, but I do sometimes think that they perhaps don't visit as often as they would have done...we're just a cheaper alternative to Social Services” (Project Worker#3-01).

“The only problem that I do find actually, and it is quite common within the service is that, once we're actually involved, some Social Services workers tend to forget that they've got a client anymore and everything's sort of left to us. Which we can find quite frustrating at times” (Project Worker#1-01).

Project workers were also clear that due to social services remit being primarily around the requirement to deal with child protection issues, any other kind of welfare support need is passed over to the project workers. This was acknowledged by the social services manager who talked about the need to recruit a range of largely untrained people in social care work in a context of reduced resources. S/he explained that with a national shortage of social workers it is no longer possible to offer generic family support. As such, the LA has set up a service which was offering direct practical low-level support to families. These 'home visitors' are recruited locally and are drawn from a wide

range of social groups/professions, some of whom have been service users themselves, while others are ex-foster carers and retired teachers. The jobs act as entry level positions such that an individual can enter into social care services as a lay home visitor with "minimal training." This role was compared to the service provided by FSS:

"I don't think a family support worker in my service would be doing anything very much different to what a support worker in FSS would be doing except that the focus is perhaps different. I suppose that's the benefit of partnership working, and also because they have a defined number of families that they're working with, some of whom were in the core building that's, so they'll see them far more frequently, the level of support can be more intensive than the staff in my service can do who are doing a visit maybe once or twice a week" (Social Services Manager).

For the social services manager, the work of the FSS very much complimented that provided by his support staff such that in "those cases where it's worked really really well has been where it has complemented and everybody's been clear about ok, this is what, this is my bit of this jigsaw in terms of supporting the family".

The project workers' lack of training was a concern for some local actors, however, who emphasised the limits to what project workers were able to achieve and the associated need for other agencies to remain involved with a family to avoid placing too much responsibility on project workers:

“we are talking about people that are very dedicated to the work they do...they're not social workers and I don't think they should have to take on that type of responsibility either. I think my biggest fear for anybody involved in these projects is that they'll become pseudo social workers and take on an awful lot of responsibility that really perhaps is outside their remit, and that will mean that other agencies may absolve themselves of that responsibility” (YOT officer).

### **The power of the central and local state**

This section looks at the role of the state together with the power relations between central state and local state actors in the genesis and evolution of the FSS.

The FSS was driven by and dependent on the central state. However, the interdependencies between the national and local level are complex and have transformed as the project has evolved. At the outset, the project emerged as a response to the requirement set by central government to develop a homelessness strategy. Preventing homelessness had been a priority for central Government since the late 1990s and the Homelessness Act 2002 placed a duty on LAs to develop homelessness strategies which emphasised prevention through addressing causes and alleviation of symptoms. It was in this context that the local problem regarding the repeat homelessness of vulnerable families was identified and a solution – the provision of intensive family support - proposed. The FSS was also dependent on central Government as a consequence of its reliance on non-local resources and the



provision of central state funding through the *Supporting People* regime. The latter stipulated the service standards the project should meet and dictated some procedural requirements that all *Supporting People* projects had to follow such as carrying out needs and risk assessments. According to data collected in interviews, however, it seems that the main impact this funding had in terms of shaping how the project was run was the way in which it prohibited project workers from undertaking one-to-one work with children, thus, directly affecting and limiting the type of work that could be carried out. It had little role, however, in shaping the FSS through the provision of practice guidelines, governance requirements or performance management targets. Thus, the policy solution (based on the DFP) emerged as a local response in a context of well-established interventions for disadvantaged families.

Notwithstanding this lack of a direct influencing role for central state, the Government played a key role through the distribution of key concepts or discourses that came to frame the FSS. It was seen to be important to couch the FSS in a language that rendered the project politically acceptable by aligning it with the national ASB policy. Indeed, the project needed to be discursively formulated in a way that reflected the institutional environment in which it was embedded and the strategic interests of local actors. The discourse of ASB provided the language through which the project and the problem it sought to address came to be conceptualised. In Coleman's (2004) terminology, the 'primary definers' were local state actors who drew on dominant narratives to provide the terms of the discourse which underpinned and gave legitimacy to the project. This enabled it to gain credibility and garner support among local government actors. However, the policy was not evidence

of centrally directed local state agencies implementing a national agenda. As discussed above, the FSS was the outcome of the competing interests of different state agencies, in particular, housing and social services and, with them, the objectives of social and criminal policies. For this reason, the project was, to an extent, initially marginalised within the LA as it did not sit easily with the direction of national ASB policy at the time. This was until the emergence of the Respect Agenda in 2006 which emphasised a more concerted ASB strategy focused on not only enforcement but the 'root causes' of ASB.

As a result of the RAP, the FSS received extra government funding from the Respect Taskforce and officially became one the 50 Respect Areas and part of the national 'roll out' of FIPs. Interviews carried out in 2006 sought to explore the impact the Respect agenda had on the project. The LA lead officer described how as a result of the RAP, the project became far more credible than it has been previously and ensured other agencies bought into the project:

"we're in a kind of different, completely different environment to the Government being interested in the services, the evaluation having been done. Therefore the support and, and the desire to, to have the things in place are all here. Whereas back in two thousand and, what two thousand and three in March although corporately it was, it was something we said we wanted, it was new and it was I suppose experimental and there was...I'm not, when I say Education weren't bought in, I'm not saying that the Directory level they weren't but certainly at the level, my level, managerial level, there was not a lot of interest really" (LA lead officer-02)

"I think it [the Respect Agenda] gives you the, the backing. It gives, it forces other departments to buy in, like health, like DFES" (Project Manager#2).

The LA lead officer also described how members of the Respect Taskforce had personally intervened at a local level to ensure that agencies collaborated with the project, thus giving the likes of health authorities little choice about whether to engage in partnership working described by the LA lead officer as 'virtual compulsion'. What kind of partnership working such forced responsabilisation creates is debatable and something beyond the remit of this thesis:

"They said, 'well what agencies aren't working with you?' we said, 'well health have been nowhere and Jobcentre Plus were not really engaged'...they went to the Department of Health and the Department of Work and Pensions and they said, 'we want to link with every family support project at local area and we want this made compulsory, virtually.' Within a couple of weeks I got the Department of Health ringing me saying, 'Can we meet you?' and Regional Jobcentre Plus. The moment I met with them, 'what do you want?' 'well we need somebody from Health really on the Admissions Panel and Steering Group because we've got all these mental health problems, you know, we need somebody who can engage on a kind of commissioning operational side.' 'Okay, fine we'll go to the PCT and we'll tell them.' PCT were wrote to saying, 'we've gotta have somebody over here'...it does feel like because of

Respect we are moving forward in ways that we couldn't have hoped to have moved forward in year one" (LA lead officer-02).

Despite these changes in the local and national profile of the FSS, the LA manager felt that the impact of the Respect Agenda had not changed the service 'on the ground' but had merely changed the language used to describe the project and its approach, in particular with the use of key Respect terminology such as the 'twin track' approach. However, this change of language did not reflect a change in the project's practices, rather the LA manager described how they had merely become more 'vocal' about an approach which had more or less been endorsed at a national level:

"we've always had a twin track approach, it's just that we've perhaps been more vocal about it" (LA lead officer-02).

This raises the issue of the extent to which the central state drew from local projects in the formulation of its FIP policy discourse. It is perhaps the case that a policy and discourse that had been developed at a local level was adopted in revised form by the central state was then redistributed to the local level through guidance documents and rhetoric:

"I mean like you don't know either whether in the beginning we've impacted on the national agenda or they've impacted on us through this [the respect agenda]" (LA lead officer-02).



The Respect funding did have one significant impact on project practice however in that it enabled the project to recruit more staff and begin working directly with children, something that was prohibited under the Supporting People funding. As such, the respect funding was described as being very useful and welcome:

"You could focus on the parenting and you could focus on helping the parents but what we couldn't do is direct work with children. So you know the times when you need to take the children to school and sitting in the classroom and actually have one to one time with children or, you know take them to certain activities, you couldn't do that really legitimately within the funding although our supporting people services also kind of matured as well cos that was new and, you know they're more interested in outcomes, they don't want ineligible work to be done but a little bit here and there if, if, the outcomes are right they would, they wouldn't really mind quite so much, but, but to do the length that we need, if you think that we have as many children in the FSS as the Youth Inclusion Service for their whole YIS Scheme and they've got six children's workers working with them and we've just got one worker from that YIS Team working in our service..." (LA lead officer-02).

### **The influence of non-state agents of government**

As Stenson and Edwards (2001) have observed, nuanced analysis of the local politics of crime control, demonstrate how sites of governance are often located beyond the state. Reflecting this, the local political struggle that provided the

conditions of existence for the project comprised a combination of different state and non-state agents of government including a local residents group where the project was located.

As noted in Chapter Four, the project is located in a leafy conservation area comprising large, high-priced Victorian stone built houses, most of which are privately owned and described by one interviewee as a "an old upper class Victorian housing estate" and an area where "people meet together, and you know, they're the same sort of economic group and you know, they have cheese and wine parties every now and again and that sort of thing":

"So the people that live in these houses tend to be fairly affluent, fairly well educated or very well educated, liberal minded, broad minded people, a lot of people that work at the hospital so many consultants and doctors. You have a lot of solicitors and barristers and that tends, and a lot of people that are in fairly senior positions in civil service and university lecturers with a lot of university members, and those are the predominant social class of the people that live here. The people that do live here love the big Victorian houses, very keen to preserve the atmosphere" (Resident#1).

The FSS was situated in a refurbished council-owned property within this area which had previously been used as temporary homelessness accommodation. Residents were not consulted about the decision to locate the FSS in this building and only became aware of the existence of the project within two months of the first three families moving into the core residential

accommodation and a corresponding increase in incidents of nuisance/incivilities (allegedly) caused by the families living there. Although immediate action was taken by the FSS to curtail the problem, serious disturbances and trouble continued with “the police becoming very, very heavily involved”. The lead LA officer explained how part of the difficulty was caused by the fact that none of the children living in the core residential unit were in school and throughout the first summer the project was operational, there were a number of problematic incidents in the neighbourhood (including speeding cars performing handbrake turns, cars being set alight, vandalism, young people hiding in gardens and firing airguns, noise, abuse and generalised ‘threatening’ behaviour) that engendered a level of anxiety and unease among residents. This was compounded by the fact that the project had only had a very short time to become operational and this meant that, initially, the project operated with under-developed policies, processes and procedures which lead to problems. This was exacerbated by difficulties recruiting suitably qualified and experienced staff. For the first six months (prior to the research commencing) the project was staffed via short-term secondments from Housing, Social Services and other LA departments. As a result, and despite some local residents expressing mixed feelings about the project, the majority were united in being firmly against the unit being located in the neighbourhood and sought to ensure the project was either better managed or closed down:

A2: “...there were people, and [chair of residents association] was one of them, who thought that actually these, particularly the youngsters, the children and the youngsters, and the adults as well,



deserved a chance, you know, but a proper chance – not just being moved somewhere else to carry on as they had been doing...

A1: So [name] at number six made the point that there was absolutely no facilities on their property, on number four property, for children to play. So wasn't surprising they were wanting to go, climb through and use their swings and so on.

A2: And at one point some of them nicked some garden furniture, didn't they?

A1: I mean for, I spent most of my life, professional life as a psychiatrist, working for seven years in child and adolescent psychiatry, and I'm not opposed to the principle of this type of unit. What I was opposed to was dumping it in a residential area, without any proper oversight and without proper planning and management" (Residents#3a,3b).

Moreover, while some local residents felt that ideally they would prefer the project's residential accommodation to be located elsewhere, a number expressed the view that citing the core unit in an affluent area was a positive attribute since it provided an opportunity for project residents to experience living in a "cohesive community" where individuals took "responsibility for their behaviour":

"...and not putting it in a middle class neighbourhood where people expect certain things, is actually, what's the point? Because if you just put them next to their neighbours who are exactly, who are not as bad as them, but you know could be, given the right



circumstances, I mean, we all could be given the right circumstances, but you know, when somebody, when you live in a street where they have high expectations and you're told when you move in here, you know, they don't like, they don't do that here, I mean you know, 'what do you mean, don't do that here?', 'Well they just don't; that's not how they live', you know" (Resident#2).

Notwithstanding these contradictory views about the merits of locating the project in the neighbourhood, members of the local community took collective action against the project through the very active and well organised local residents association that had initially been established during the 1990s to campaign for traffic calming measures and action to address problems caused by street prostitution and drug abuse in a neighbouring area:

"they have a Residents' Association that's very, you know very together really and I went to a number of their Residents' Meetings in the evening with my Director and [local councillor] and you know they were very organised meetings and chaired. They were very different to the kind of meetings we might have gone to on a Council estate...At the time they wanted the whole place closed down and what they said to me was, you know, 'You do, you do realise we're gonna take every legal form of action within the law we can to get you closed down'" (LA lead officer-02).

The community were perceived to be able to assert direct and effective pressure on the project partly as a result of their cultural and social capital

which ensured their protests were taken notice of. The residents group consisted of middle-class, highly educated, professional, confident individuals who were well of aware of how to ensure that their voices were heard. Among other things, they contacted the then Home Secretary David Blunkett directly as well as local councillors and had good relations with the local police beat officer. They also threatened taking their story to the local media, although they never resorted to this.

“There were, there were problems when it was first set up and it was set up very, very quickly and the reason I got involved in it was because I was getting lots of emails and telephone calls from local residents about these children running wild around the area, cars being damaged etc” (Local councillor).

The residents association had a direct impact on the way the project was managed. Indeed, the project management submitted what was described as a 'recovery plan' to the residents association to appease them: "we knew we had to gain their trust to, to continue to function in the area" (LA lead officer-02). Following a series of meetings between residents, local councillors and the project management, some families were moved from the residential unit on to outreach support, others were evicted, and more robust admission and security procedures were put in place and the project and the families living in the core began to keep a low profile within the community:

"I think they still feel that they got it wrong in the beginning and that everybody's watching them...They've got to stay in and keep quiet"  
(Resident#2).

The impact of the residents on the way the core unit was implemented was complex and difficult to disentangle. This was primarily because the project was new, had been set up quickly and processes and procedures had yet to be put in place so the teething problems that occurred were not entirely a surprise for the LA lead officer. As such, according to the latter, many of the changes that were implemented were likely to have happened anyway, albeit perhaps at a slower pace e.g. the establishment of an admissions panel to better judge the suitability of families being accepted for the core unit, permanent staff, tighter management of the core unit, and increased surveillance technology. However, local residents, while pushing for increased control of the families living in the core, resisted the implementation of CCTV and security lighting. This was not because they disagreed with the principle of the families being placed under near constant surveillance, but because they felt that such technology created an image that did not 'fit' with the conservation area within which the project was located and they thought such overt technology may work to stigmatise the area by, for instance, affecting (very high) property prices. As such, the residents made complaints about fencing constructed around the property, the CCTV cameras and the security lighting, installed partly to appease them. Indeed, one resident admitted to being "horrified" by the introduction of these measures:

"...residents weren't happy about the fence cos they didn't feel it was in keeping with the local area. They didn't like the CCTV because they felt that was not conducive" (Resident #1).

Although surveillance technologies were implemented, they were introduced in a way that was agreeable to the local residents and, as such, the technology remains very high-tech and discrete. This has worked to create a house that does not (at least overtly) resemble the sort of 'colditz' type accommodation units that have been described in the media (Parr and Nixon, 2008). As such, the house very much blends in with other properties in the area. In fact one of the residents was keen that more work is done e.g. improvements to the garden surrounding the property, to ensure that the property does not appear in any way "institutional".

As the incidence of nuisance behaviour in the neighbourhood had decreased, local residents have begun to more readily accept the unit. Reflecting on their experiences four years after the core block was established, residents were clear that the measures undertaken by the FSS had been 'successful'. Part of this perceived success is, however, due to the essential invisibility of the core and families living in therein. Thus, while the core unit 'fits' in a physical sense with the wider neighbourhood, the families living therein are very much excluded from the local community:

"I have no problem with it at all, we have no noise. I don't even know who's living there. I do see people coming and going but not, not



such that I've actually actively, if they walk past me in the street I wouldn't know who they are, so it's great" (Resident#1).

The local 'acceptance' of families' may be best described as a form of 'conditional inclusion' with the conditionality being that they remain invisible.

Their anonymity was welcomed by one resident in particular:

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"...we do know about each other in this community. We do know who moves in and who moves out. You know, we do get invitations to come to drinks, whatever. Which, they're never gonna invite these people, are they? 'Would you like to come to the [neighbourhood] barbecue?' I don't think so" (Resident#2).

One resident also suggested, however, that the time had come for the project to begin opening its doors and engaging with the community:

"I think the time has come for them to come out of their shell a little bit actually. You know, I think they've done, they've done pretty well in kind of containing everything up to now. But it would be, you know, they need to let us know what's going on. And I think they need to, you know, just open up a little bit more" (Resident#2).

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter has focussed on analysing the specific local context of the ASB policy production process. It has provided an account of the realisation of the

FSS that is sensitive to the 'social' and the geo-historical conditions that determined the project and to the necessarily unstable outcomes associated with it (Hughes, 2009). This has entailed an examination of the exercise of power and the activities of the powerful through an analysis of the role of local politics, partnership working between the FSS and other interested groups, together with the role of the local and central state.

The chapter has revealed how establishing a convincing 'problematisation' on which to build support for the FSS was a necessary condition in the emergence of the FSS (Jacobs, *et al*, 2003; Stenson and Edwards, 2003). That said, the particular discourse that was privileged was contingent and the outcome of local political struggles – a process that could not have been uncovered by the perusal of policy documents alone (Stenson and Edwards, 2003). The initial driving force behind the FSS was the need to establish a homelessness strategy and government officials were tasked with identifying homelessness problems in the locality and developing appropriate responses. The problem of the repeat homelessness of families with multiple welfare needs was identified and the development of a project along similar lines to the DFP was proposed to provide a sustainable solution. This particular narrative reflected a political culture within the LA's housing services team that embraced an orientation towards a welfare ethos for vulnerable families, including those accused of ASB.

Establishing a project based purely on 'supportive' interventions for "difficult families" proved to have insufficient political weight, however, and, as such, it was necessary for the project to embrace a more disciplinary approach that

gave equal weight to the needs of the 'community', as well as homeless families in order to gain resources and political credibility. This appeal to the 'community' is reflective of a shift to governance identified in both governmentality and political economy approaches in which there has emerged a greater role for citizens and 'communities' (Hughes and Edwards, 2002). It also echoed New Labour's dominant ASB policy which was (particularly in 2002) in a large part concerned with protecting 'communities' and the 'law abiding majority' over and above the needs of 'perpetrators'. This shifted the lens through which the social problem was viewed to one that was not only concerned with meeting the needs of homeless families but one that was primarily about controlling ASB. Although aligned with the Government's ASB agenda, the FSS was not evidence of centrally directed local state actors implementing a national policy. Rather, the FSS emerged from a struggle between different socio-political forces played out on a unequal field defined by 'strategic selectivity' such that some methods of addressing policy issues, in this case ASB, were more or less permissible (Jessop, 2001). This demonstrates how local state ASB policy should be understood in relational terms rather than as something that is simply orchestrated and imposed by central government (Gray, 2009a).

In attempting to render the policy politically viable, it was also necessary for local agents to gain the support a coalition of local state actors. The particular coalition of support that was established, led primarily by the commitment of the local ALMO and social services was, in part, a result of the professional habitus of the actors who were driving the policy forward. The housing backgrounds of the project staff gave the project a certain legitimacy with the local ALMO. The



case management approach, however, together with the provision of regular contact appealed to social services managers on an ideological level but also because the project was seen as an attractive resource in the context of an under-funded welfare state. These internal relations endowed the FSS with the capacity to 'work' in particular ways (something that will be elaborated further in Chapters Seven and Eight), drawing attention to how the kind of partnership that exists at a local level is vitally important to understanding what role intensive family support might play in the governance of ASB. Indeed, although FSS was reliant on other agencies, it is conceivable that the project could have been established with the support of an alternative set of partner agencies (as has been the case in other locations where projects are led and staffed by social workers for instance) and this would have produced a different kind of project (Parr, 2008). The FSS, as it eventually emerged, was a result, therefore, of complex processes through which the problem and an appropriate response were conceptualised. This underscores political economist's claims that the state is not an internally coherent entity and does not operate according to a single logic. Rather, the FSS was the outcome of contingent and open struggles between local state actors (Jessop, 2002).

Local state actors were the driving force behind the instantiation of the FSS. The only non-state governmental actors that had any active influence over the project were local residents. Running the residential element of the intervention, in particular, entailed balancing the needs of individual families with the interests of the local residents association. The appeasement of the local resident association was vital in maintaining the existence of the project; this relatively powerful group could have caused the project's demise. The



impact of this group has worked to ensure that the FSS is exclusionary since the core unit's existence was only deemed to be acceptable if its inhabitants are rendered invisible and the local area is 'reclaimed' and 'cleansed' of their presence. For local propertied and 'respectable' residents, if not regulated sufficiently by the project staff, families living in the core unit were understood to detrimentally impact on the social and cultural fabric, as well as the prosperity of the area. This echoes the analyses of Coleman (2004) and other political economists who point to an association between ASB policy and the cleansing of space, and the impact of this for marginalised individuals. This exclusionary logic was not being driven by a coalition of state actors, however, but by "mobilised communities" (Stenson, 2008) who do not form part of formal partnership governance arrangements or therefore the 'state', however conceived. Yet, this anxious middle class cohort possessed power and their interests were promoted, to the detriment of those who are powerless, the families living in the core whose liberty was further restricted at the behest of the local residents. While this draws attention to the centrality of the analytical concept of 'class' and the agency of locally powerful actors in governance processes, and might be illustrative of a concern with consulting local residents in order to enrol them as supporters in ASB governance, the FSS did not represent a neo-liberal political rationality whereby governing ASB is shared with local residents (Flint, 2004). Indeed, notwithstanding the various appeals to community, the FSS does not represent a reconfiguration of state boundaries. In contrast to governance processes identified in both political economic and governmentality literature which emphasise the role of non-state agencies, in the development of the FSS, there existed no real shift from responsibility passing from state to other agents of government.

The analysis has unpacked the different origins of a local intensive family support project. It has provided an account of causation that seeks explanation, rather than just narrative description, and assumes that the FSS, like all governance projects, are the consequence of complex causal mechanisms arising from both discursive and non-discursive practices. This allows us to see local power relations as 'real' and 'causal' without falling foul of the pitfalls of determinism. It assumes that contexts do not simply form the backdrop to ASB control measures but are constitutive of them (Hughes, 2007; Edwards and Hughes, 2005). The findings from this analysis have illustrated how modes of governing ASB are vulnerable to influence and change from competing discursive formations (Prior, 2007). Alongside this, it has disclosed not just the role of discourse but discretion and choice in policy-making and, with that, the power of formal and informal political relations (Stenson, 2008). In the case study in question, the determination of the FSS was one that arose out of complex assemblages of people, positions and practices. The emergence of the FSS was dependent, therefore, on the intersection of a complex conjunction of causal discursive and extra-discursive factors. This highlights the importance of thinking about the geographies of power, the 'active subject' and the various processes and practices of governing as Clarke (2004: 70) suggests:

"I want to argue for governing being a more uneven and partial process that has to proceed through alliances, compromises and conflicts in which subjects succumb, sign up, or comply – but also resist or prove recalcitrant and troublesome."



## **Chapter Seven**

### **Realising intensive family support: the views of project staff and partner agencies**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter Six focused primarily on an exploration of the processes involved in founding the FSS politically. Chapter Seven shifts the focus on to another 'moment' of the FSS policy, namely, its 'street-level' operationalisation. In order to explore how the project is played out in practice (Ferguson, 2007), the chapter draws on an analysis of data derived from interviews with the FSS project staff as well as local actors from a range of agencies who work in partnership with the project. The analysis that follows begins with a detailed deconstruction of the types of discourse that render the FSS policy problem 'thinkable and governable' and which, in turn, legitimise certain actions and practices. Attention is also paid to the practical implementation of these technologies of government in, through and around which the FSS is operationalised. These findings represent a preliminary step in addressing the question of what impact these strategies have. This is because at any one time the 'essence' of a policy is unclear: "Any of its bureaucratic framing, how it is imagined by the public for which it is intended, its diffuse impact on the ground, or the managerial summation of its effects, can lay claim to being the 'reality' of policy" (Ferguson, 2007: 182). With this in mind, the next chapter analyses the process of implementation from the perspective of those on the receiving end.



This chapter will address the following research questions:

- What assumptions and discursive formulations underpin actors' understandings of the families' behaviour requiring intervention by the FSS?
- What governmental rationalities are implicit in the practices of the FSS?
- What technologies of intervention are associated with the FSS?
- How are these rationalities translated into methods, strategies and technologies of government?

**What assumptions and discursive formulations underpin actors' understandings of the families' behaviour requiring intervention by the FSS?**

All families referred to FSS have been accused of causing ASB and will have been subject to some sort of enforcement action as a result. None of those interviewed rejected the notion that the families referred to the FSS behaved in ways that had a detrimental and sometimes harmful impact on others. Likewise, reflecting dominant ASB narratives, all local agents involved with the project did not resist the notion that ASB is a real, identifiable problem; that some behaviour can appropriately be described as 'anti-social' and with that, 'communities' need to be protected. Indeed, the existence of ASB was taken as a given, although interviewees were clear that it is an essentially ambiguous

label and that what may be defined anti-social is dependent on the context in which it takes place:

Q: "So what would you describe as antisocial behaviour?"

A: "Making the lives of neighbours hell basically, not letting, not letting other people live their lives without interference and without fear... but having said that you see, what one person classes as ASB another one might not. So it's, it's all about getting things in proportion as well...But my idea of antisocial behaviour is when what you're doing is affecting other people, affecting them getting sleep at night for instance with the noise, or making them frightened, intimidation, threats, loud music, all that sort of thing. Dogs, dogs can be a biggie" (Project Worker#1).

"it means anything that is causing a disturbance in the neighbourhood and can include low-level criminal activity for example, criminal damage, noise, abuse, kicking a football around if it's done at the wrong time or to extremes. I don't, in our definition of ASB you don't really include you know serious criminal behaviour" (Project Manager#1).

Despite this recognition of the disruptive nature of the families' behaviour, project staff and local agents resisted labelling families themselves as 'anti-social', preferring instead to label families' behaviour in such terms in an attempt to de-personalise the 'problem'. Naming behaviour as 'anti-social' was seen to be an unproblematic, neutral description of harmful behaviour where as

naming people as 'anti-social' was understood as unacceptable given not only the label's negative connotations derived in a large part from media and political discourses, but the consequences for families once labelled as such. During interviews, both project managers clearly rejected populist discourses around ASB prevalent within the media and political rhetoric, in particular, the use of what were conceived of as demonising labels:

"I mean I know some people hate the label anti-social behaviour, families who commit ASB but I just think it's very, you know, descriptive of what actually they're doing...I think it's a useful label as long as people understand that we're not, not speaking to sort of demonise them in that way by saying it, it's just a description of what they're actually doing. We're not calling them, I wouldn't call them anti-social families, that kind of skews the meaning completely and I wouldn't call the kids yobs like the government like to do" (Project Manager#1).

Q: Do you think it's a useful term, anti-social behaviour?

A: I think it's more useful than calling young people thugs on the street, anti-social could sum up a lot of definitions. I'm not sure it's the best, it's the best way of describing somebody, but I'd, personally don't know any, I can't think of anything that would be better, I don't like people being stereotyped, I don't like this if there's a gang of kids at the end of the road just hanging out they're automatically committing anti-social behaviour" (Project Manager#2).

"I don't know if the families themselves are anti-social. I just think they're sort of tied up in it and need help to get out...and because they've sort of got this anti-social label, named on them, their kids get blamed for a lot of things they've not involved with (Project Worker#3).

As the quotes above infer, project staff both attested to and resisted popular ASB narratives that circulate in the public realm. They reproduced policy assumptions regarding the damaging effects of behaviour (defined in the quote below as being a 'realistic' perspective) but refused to accept dominant definitions attributed to alleged perpetrators, for example, thugs or yobs. Local actors working in partnership with the project also recognised that the FSS project staff operated with a discourse that did not echo populist images of those accused of ASB:

"when we're talking to the Project Workers and Project Manager there seems to be this emphasis from within the Project that, you know, they're clear about, like they're realistic that, you know, these families cause problems for the neighbours and the community and their behaviour's problematic, so they'll label the behaviour antisocial but they're very clear about not labelling people antisocial and I think the thing I was talking about before is, you know, I suppose kind of the political discourse round antisocial behaviour is, you know, they're yobs, they're louts, they're this, they're that and I think the Project's very careful not to use that more negative language" (ASB team manager).



The resistance to labelling families with defamatory terminology was related to the detailed knowledge regarding the circumstances of families referred to the services that all those interviewed possessed. Interviewees drew attention to the difficult material contexts and to the debilitating influence of myriad unmet and complex welfare needs (both personal and social) - that were often perceived to have not been addressed by other agencies - and that was understood to underpin problematic behaviour. Related to this, and in contrast to the political rationality found in policy texts at a national level, assumptions about the families did not involve a simplistic focus on individual deficiencies, rather interviewees exhibited more nuanced understandings of the 'root cause' of ASB than those that circulate in the public realm. Reflecting work that emphasises the political agency of those implementing policy at a local level, the way in which most actors described the families and understood their behaviour did not therefore mirror popular and simplistic discourses that 'other' households and present them in stigmatising and pathologising terms as irresponsible and feckless 'problem families'. Rather, they clearly related disruptive behaviour to a range of factors associated with families' personal histories, and their health and welfare concerns:

"When you really get down to it, the ASB is just a real surface layer, and that's why they come to us, but really there's always, nine times out of ten there's past abuse or continuing abuse, there's mental health problems, drug, alcohol addiction, all these things, learning difficulties, that have led to the ASB that has sort of led them to our attention" (Project Worker#1).

While recognising the important influence of a range of factors, all interviewees also framed the problems underlying ASB, at least in part, in individualised terms, and commonly as deficient parenting skills. In this sense, their discourse did reflect the dominant ASB narrative which draws on underclass theories and cycles of deficient parenting, as well as notions of 'risk'. Indeed, parenting problems were an issue that was seen to be endemic within all families referred to the project:

"She had failed in setting boundaries and this was the main the problem now was the boys seem to think that they could do whatever they want, when they wanted, and didn't have to think about anybody else, you know, while they were doing it" (ASB officer#1).

For many, poor parenting was clearly attributed to cycles of deficient parenting passed from one generation to another whereby parents who have been parented poorly are unable themselves to parent adequately. This was a view expressed by all the project staff interviewed, as well as other agents, including those who referred families to the project:

"They've [parents] lost parental control. They've probably had quite a tough upbringing themselves and don't know how to deal with problems. So we sort of go in and break the cycle...you know I think there's quite a lot of upset, violence and neglect in, you know, from the parents themselves had all this, so they've gone on

to be parents and they don't know how to do it because of their own troubled past (Project Worker#3)

...it's because they don't know any different. That's how they've been brought up... it's learned behaviour from their childhood, that they're now passing on to their kids, and as I say, it's all about re-education, making them try and see where they're going wrong (Project Worker#1).

While many interviewees echoed New Labour's ASB discourse in drawing on behavioural and pathological understandings of 'poor' parenting, a number avoided linking ASB and poor parenting in reductionist and oversimplified manner by underscoring the contextual factors that impact on the parents, usually single-parent women, who had been referred to the service and which make it hard to operate as an 'ideal' parent:

"A very high percentage of our parents have themselves had quite, you know, horrific experiences, there are still problems with violence, drug addiction, whatever, and I think a lot of the parents when they are feeling sort of safe and valued themselves actually their parenting is a lot better" (Project Worker#3)

"I mean poor parenting is a major issue but usually there is a lot around that poor parenting that's caused them to be poor parents" (Project Manager#1)

Difficulties around single parent women being unable to asset control over teenage boys was a recurring theme:

"And we mustn't deny the fact the boys were taking part in some pretty serious anti-social behaviour, making people's life an absolute misery. Louise was taking that on board but she was in a situation where she was trying to, the way she felt, I think she felt she could protect her younger children was to keep them with her all in one room, because the boys would take all of the house, nothing she said or did was going to change that" (YOT officer)

This discussion highlights how local agents' conceptions of 'the problem' were complex, reflecting the multi-layered and inter-related problems that characterised families' lives such that neither individual, as opposed to social, factors were theorised as the single root cause of the 'offending' behaviour that had led the family to behave in a way that could be defined as 'anti-social' and ultimately to be referred to the FSS.

For those in front-line services who referred the families, this recognition of their underlying needs led either to a reluctance to impose punitive measures or an acknowledgment that enforcements tools were likely to be (or in some cases already had proved to be) ineffective in addressing the problem behaviour since they fail to address 'root causes' and offer more sustainable solutions. This seemed to be, in part, a reflection of the council's approach to ASB that was not enforcement-led but one that was committed to seeking serious legal action only when it is deemed to be absolutely necessary, such that even when cases



reach the ASB team, other options are considered prior to enforcement action being taken. As such, the option of referring the family to the project was a welcome alternative for the referrers:

"...it was just clear that, you know, it was a family that had had an awful lot of problems for many years, and I didn't feel, I mean, you know, I could have just put it through as a case of intentionally homeless, but I didn't want to do that. I wouldn't have felt comfortable doing that. I wanted to look into it and see what, you know, what could be done[...]Given the domestic abuse and the attempted suicides that she'd made, and the drink problem which she had, which was, you know, more likely to be as a result of these things happening, I was just pleased that we could do something positive for her." (Homelessness Officer).

"I feel confident and happy that instead of just evicting a family, as we would normally have done, particularly with the fact that you've got the three younger girls with it and they weren't really guilty of anything other than being late for school at the time, you know, it was unfair to evict a family like that and not have any alternative to put them into which is the main reason for us we would use the [FSS] because when a case reaches us we are looking at possession, usually possession orders and things like that, legal action orders...We've not just, you know, we've not just said 'right, well we'll get rid of this family and then, you know, they've got to

find their own way' sort of thing. That wouldn't solve the problem at all" (ASB officer).

Referrers recognised that the complex problems that defined the lives of the families they referred to the FSS, in many cases, had already and were likely in the future to result in repeat homelessness and generational cycles of poor behaviour, unless sustainable solutions to ASB were found. Thus, referrals were made where families were deemed to be 'in need' and the FSS was seen as offering a long-term solution to problems of ASB that was frequently referred to as 'breaking the cycle':

"Now there's obviously been a cycle with Charlotte, because she's presented as homeless many times before, and it's looking at trying to break that cycle, and also using the opportunity while they are in that situation to put in the support and help people to move on really, and acknowledge how they feel they can move on or things that they have done that have contributed to the situation really" (HAS Team).

Reflecting this view, the first Project Manager interviewed described how the project often acts as a 'last chance saloon' prior to enforcement action:

"The project is about supporting families as a whole, that are committing ASB in the communities, it's about almost last chance saloon for families, and if we don't work with the families, things like children being taken into care, losing your accommodation,

maybe some form of criminal proceedings may take place”  
(Project Manager#1).

### **What governmental rationalities are implicit in the practices of the FSS?**

This section looks at the way the FSS intervention itself is framed by interviewees and the discourses that underpin this which contain assumptions about motivations and solutions. This includes a consideration of the desired outcomes and objectives of the FSS.

#### ***Responsibilisation and remoralisation***

To a large extent, the FSS was framed by the respondents in ways that are very much about both responsibilisation, self-regulation and remoralisation, reflecting wider discourses in the governance of conduct. Indeed, the FSS was described as being explicitly concerned with changing the (problematic) behaviour of family members and helping them develop better and more appropriate ways of conducting themselves, and maintaining family and extra-familial relationships:

“Well we’ve always seen [the FSS] as being a tool to tackle ASB just like an eviction might be or an ASBO might be or we mix it all up together and actually, it’s not a soft option, we’re not just saying to these tenants, ‘come on and we’re gonna reward you.’ We’re actually saying to them, ‘We’re giving you an opportunity to change the way you behave’ and some of changing the way they behave is partly about addressing some of their own support needs because they’ve had awful lives quite a lot of these people”  
(LA lead officer).

This view of the role of the FSS was shared by other key players including those agents who refer families to the project. For them, straightforward punitive approaches such as evictions or ASBOs were viewed as having limited efficacy since they do not involve a remoralising element in which the value base and behaviour of families is adjusted. The alleged resilience of families to change was again somewhat individualised and related to deeply ingrained ways of behaving passed down through generations:

“We can evict them but unless we actually work with that family to modify their behaviour then the cycle is continuing because no-one’s said to them, well we’ve said to them, ‘we don’t think your behaviour’s acceptable,’ for whatever reason we’ve got where, ‘it’s not acceptable, we’ve tried to tell you that it’s not acceptable, you’re not changing, we’re going to evict you.’ But unless they put the support in to help them change and it’s very difficult for someone to face up to what they’re doing that’s upsetting people, especially if the adults have done it as children and it was acceptable in that family, especially if that’s that family’s lifestyle. So my own personal opinion is, is that if we, if we’re dealing with it whether it’s, call it ASB, call it from a welfare issue that we’re looking at, this family modifying their behaviour and putting the support in not only to help this generation but the future generations so we break that cycle” (ASB manager).



### ***Challenging; not a soft option***

All stakeholders saw the FSS as an alternative to enforcement action and the FSS was described as offering 'support' to families. Yet at the same time, some, particularly the project management staff tasked with 'selling' the project and ensuring it was politically viable, were uncomfortable with the term 'support' as they feared it contained connotations which implied the project was a 'soft alternative' that 'rewarded' ASB. Consequently, the term 'support' was either resisted as a descriptive label or it was balanced with a depiction of the FSS as being *both* supportive and 'challenging'. Indeed, the latter term arose throughout interviews:

"I don't think the word 'support' is useful either, because support implies something very woolly and whilst we are supporting families, there's no doubt about it, we're supporting them to change their behaviour" (LA lead officer-01).

"I'm not there to sort of demonise people or anything like that, but I do very much promote a culture of we're not messing about, we are going to challenge behaviour and, you know, when there are complaints about people we can still deal with that under the council's ASB procedures it's just that we deal with it within those procedures but providing support at the same time to try and help them sort out their behaviour" (Project Manager#1).

The notion of 'challenging' was clearly aligned with processes of responsabilisation as the rationale for 'challenging' a family was explicitly

founded on assumed ideas regarding what is acceptable behaviour and the need for a family/member to recognise the inappropriateness of certain behaviours, take responsibility and amend their behaviour accordingly:

"If the kid's behaving in a certain way, you have to challenge that and tell them that's out of order, and sometimes you have to say things that a family doesn't want to hear, you can't always say things that they want to hear, so it's feeling comfortable and confident enough to do that. It's also about that commitment to just be able to have a nag, really, and go in there and just repeat and repeat and repeat until it sinks in, if you like, you know. It's a bit more technical than that" (Project Manager#2).

'Challenging' also involved the communication of 'censure'. Indeed, the FSS is essentially 'offence focused' and proceeds on the basis that the family has done wrong. Project workers therefore encourage families to 'think ethically' and, in particular, to develop a capacity for what Robinson (2008) calls 'victim empathy' which, it is hoped, will serve to dissuade them from future anti-social acts.

### ***A twin track approach***

Partly mirroring the views discussed above, and reflecting political discourse, the project was framed very much as a 'twin track' approach or as one project manager put it a "carrot and stick" approach. The LA lead officer suggested that the project has always adopted this way of working but has become more vociferous about the approach since the emergence of the RAP in 2006 when FIPs came to be framed in that way by central government. Thus, as well as 'challenging', presented by interviewees far more as a process involving the

remoralisation and responsabilisation of families, FSS encompasses (at least rhetorically) a more explicitly punitive element in its use of the threat of sanctions. This was partly related to the professional identity of project staff who were accustomed to and comfortable with taking enforcement action largely as a result of their background in housing where they were used to taking formal legal action. The latter was described as being 'second nature' and an approach which was perceived to contrast to the one adopted by NCH who are contracted to manage a number of other intensive family support projects. The willingness and ability to take enforcement action also seemed to be a result of close working relations with agencies who formally have those powers at their disposal:

"...we are saying quite assertively, 'we will enforce' and it's not just about eviction, it's about ASBOs, it's about using ASBOs. We've had prohibitions put in ASBOs with, with families that say, 'You won't disengage with the service'...and we've always taken the kids to the Police...we've always had a twin track approach, it's just that we've perhaps been more vocal about it [since the Respect Action Plan]" (LA lead officer).

"I personally think it's a fine line between a support and enforcement...it's almost like the carrot and stick. So you have to look at enforcement and the support at the same time... you make it clear to families at the beginning that, you know, we're here to support you, these are the things that are in your support plan but obviously, you know, we can use enforcement, and we will be

working closely with the ASB team, with social services, with the schools and the education welfare officers” (Project Manager#1).

“we had a family who were just not working with our staff at all...the kids weren’t going to school, the mother was doing absolutely nothing about getting them to school, there were child protection concerns, all sorts of kind of concerns but were just not working with us, so you know we said at Panel, ‘Okay let’s just try a kind of full attack on this one before we start taking any action’ and we just wrote to her saying, ‘right, we’ve just discussed your case at a multi-agency panel...and it was felt that you’re not taking this programme seriously, you’re not working to the resolutions that we want and if you don’t start actually attending your support programmes, keeping your appointments with your Support Worker and doing the tasks, as of Monday next week we will take action against you which will include a potential fine for not taking the children to school, eviction from the property, child protection proceedings and possibly legal proceedings, criminal proceedings against the kids for their behaviour’...Monday she started working with them” (LA lead officer-01).

The same rhetoric was reflected in interviews with local agents too. As discussed above, key players acknowledged the range of factors that were associated with a families’ behaviour and felt families required support from FSS. However, they also placed a great deal of responsibility on the family to



change their behaviour and saw the FSS as a mechanism for ensuring families changed their behaviour through sanction if necessary:

"I'm very much an honest person, let's call it what it is, let's call a spade a spade so that 'you know what you're doing that is upsetting people, this is how you remedy it, we'll help you, we'll help support you through that, we'll help you take steps to improve your or your family's qualities of life, but if you're not doing that then there are these sanctions that come along because ultimately you are responsible for your actions'. You can't forever keep on saying, it's a result of, this happened to me in childhood or that happened to me, especially when the support's there to try and help" (ASB team manager).

### ***Providing holistic and flexible solutions***

A core benefit of the FSS was seen to be about providing what were described as holistic solutions to families that took account of the range of problems and issues that they were dealing with. This was placed in contrast to interventions provided by individual services e.g social services or education welfare that often focus support on a particular need or problems such as child protection or education concerns, and where the intervention is often focused on one individual:

"My view is that we support every single member of the family, look at the root causes of the anti-social behaviour, look at any issues that each family member has" (Project Manager#1)

“...they’re looking holistically at everything. They’re looking at this family, who’ve had a problem with anti-social behaviour, it’s never in isolation, there’s always other problems be them financial, emotional, medical, education, they deal with all that” (ASB team manager).

This ‘holistic’ approach meant that project workers’ responsibilities were multiple and challenging. They are expected to assess families (often complex) needs, carry out support planning and complete support plan reviews. This entails having or acquiring, through partnership working, knowledge of a range of welfare needs including mental health problems, substance misuse, domestic violence and child development. Support planning and implementation also requires project staff to possess good networking skills to enable partnership working, while one-to-one work with families demands the ability to form effective relationships and sometimes manage challenging behaviour, and the skills and capabilities to work with that family to a depth and breadth not characteristic of other services.

### **What technologies of intervention are associated with the FSS?**

According to governmentality literature, the governmental ‘problem’ and the technique or interventions to tackle it are inseparable; it is not possible to study the *technologies* of government - “strategies, techniques and procedures through which different authorities seek to enact programmes of government in relation to the materials and forces to hand and the resistances and oppositions anticipated or encountered” (Rose, 1996: 43) - without an analysis of the

governmental *rationalities* underpinning them, and which allow us to govern and be governed. This sections looks at four core methods and technologies discussed during interviews that characterise the intervention and define how the stipulated outcomes and objectives are to be achieved.

***Micromanagement: moral regulation and re-education***

As noted above, despite a somewhat nuanced understanding of the factors that impact on families, there seemed to be a disjuncture between conceptualisations of the factors associated with ASB and perceptions of what 'issues' or support needs the FSS needed to help families address. It was common for interviewees to talk of parenting together with the establishment of routines as being *the* primary problem in all families that required intervention. Thus, no matter what range of support needs may exist, each family referred to FSS is compelled to attend a parenting skills course as well as engage in one-to-one work with project staff around parenting:

...It's a requirement, they don't all take part in it because they don't all turn up, but yeah, we do, we do, say at the beginning that, you know, they need to do some form of parenting, if they don't come on the parenting class then we will do one-to-one parenting with them (Project Manager#2).

One ASB officer described how she saw the FSS as playing a key role in "breaking the cycle of poor parenting".

"It's a cycle of perhaps poor parenting and this again I would see FSS and the support workers with the intensive support that's on

offer breaking the cycle. Because the, the upshot, the long-term situation of Mrs Smith being a poor parent to her six children is that you end up with six more people growing up with no skills to be a parent themselves" (ASB Officer1).

It seemed to be the case that problems perceived to have arisen from deficient parenting skills were easier for agents to causally relate to the (problematic) behaviour of children, conceptualised as being out of control or, more specifically, out of the control of their parents. Young people staying out late, having no routine and boundaries, and behaving in a manner that causes distress for others, was straightforwardly seen to be a sign of a lack of discipline in the home and the inability of parents to manage their children's behaviour. As a consequence, parents (which generally meant the mother) were not only required to attend parenting courses ran by external agencies but there was an emphasis on the project's micro-level management of families' lifestyles as a core part of the solution. This was implicitly linked to the perceived need to responsabilise and remoralise parents, and, in so doing, promote their self-regulation according to the norms of appropriate self-conduct constructed by project workers. Through these methods parents were encouraged to reflect on and regulate their performance as parents in line with 'expert' advice. This ranged from ensuring children have established morning and bedtime routines, to making sure the house is kept in an adequate condition, to encouraging families to eat a healthy diet.

"they will go first thing in the morning and, you know, do work with them around making sure they provide breakfast for the kids, before



they leave for school, making sure the kids are up for school, even taking the kids to school sometimes...same with bedtime routines, you know, they'll go out there in the evening make sure the kids are in, they're not out on the streets causing problems, getting in there, making sure that they're actually getting the kids to bed. Basic things like keeping the house clean as well and pointing out what's acceptable and what's not acceptable hygiene levels...'Right, this is how you keep your house clean, this is how you hang up the clothes for your children, and this is how you, you know, have a nice house the kids'll want to spend time in it, and not causing a nuisance to neighbours on the street'. We're also starting to do a lot of work around dietary issues, lots of families live on takeaways and there's, obviously there's been work recently about the links between ASB and diet and a lot of our families, you know, there's some kids that have been actually diagnosed with ADHD, a lot of our families we suspect their kids have got ADHD and we suspect that a lot of that is around diet because they're just feeding them absolute crap all day, everyday" (Project Manager#1).

The FSS therefore encompasses the elements of the those family support interventions that have been the subject of critical commentary described in Chapter Three. The service is unashamedly intrusive and entails what might be described as the 'moral' surveillance of women's homes: their cleanliness, their childrearing abilities and their personal lives. One project worker recognised that this can appear 'patronising' but was a pains to point out the limited or nonexistent life skills possessed by some of the families they support. It was

clear, however, during interviews that the project workers' stated intentions were benign and they did not see themselves as agents of a punitive state:

"I know it sounds as though I'm probably being a bit patronising, but a lot of the clients that we've worked with really haven't got a clue, you know, they've, they've cashed their money or whatever on a Monday, they go to corner shop, and spend three quarters of it and actually have nothing to show...I know I keep saying it but it's all about re-educating them, you know, and showing them, literally showing them how to do things" (Project Worker#1).

Related to this, building self-esteem and confidence among those referred was also seen as a vital part of the intervention, partly in light of the detrimental impacts of being labelled as 'anti-social'. Again, placing responsibility for changing at the behest of family members themselves to overcome their own problems:

"...you find, women particularly, but parents that have really low self-esteem, they don't feel confident about their own ability to parent, so a lot of the parenting stuff is about building their confidence to do that. A lot of work with the children is around building their confidence to engage with other kids, to go to school, to feel part of that school environment, to not feel bullied or isolated or, so yeah, I think a huge part of it is about building self-esteem, you know, if you can, if you can encourage somebody to take one small step, it encourages them to do the next and the

next and the next and therefore their confidence becomes huge”  
(Project Manager#2).

“They put their head down because they think people are looking at them...They, they feel like they’re wearing this label round their neck and everybody knows about it, and so a lot of what we do I think as well with the mothers is confidence, building their confidence up” (Project Worker#2).

Technologies of intervention such as these have been interpreted as a means through which families and their private lives become the object of increased surveillance, a process which individualises the causes of and solutions to ASB. Presented as a neutral and technical means of promoting ‘good’ parenting and household management, numerous commentators have drawn attention to the normative assumptions implicit in such advice which usually resonate with the values of white, middle class parents (e.g. Gillies, 2005a). In the context of neo-liberalism, it is argued that this reflects a state-led strategy to enhance and reproduce economic competitiveness in a global market place: a social investment state (Lister, 2006; Featherstone, 2006). However, not all of the interview material necessarily and straightforwardly lends support to these critical academic accounts for reasons detailed below and in Chapter Eight.

### ***Economic wellbeing***

While individual responsibility was strongly emphasised throughout interviews, it seemed that the FSS did not represent a full-blown responsibilisation strategy. It is more complex. On the one hand, the FSS was very much described as about ‘empowering’ women, building self-esteem and confidence to enable

them to take responsibility for their past and their future, and that of their children, and this certainly negates the context in which the family live, one characterised by poverty, powerlessness and social needs that defines the lives of many of the women. Yet the project's philosophy did not represent a wholesale shift in responsibility from the state to the individual nor are the goals of the project clearly aligned with (neoliberal) government goals e.g. getting individuals back into work. The latter was rarely mentioned in interviews. In terms of economic wellbeing, rather than encouraging families to seek work or become 'work-ready', a greater emphasis was placed on ensuring that families were paying off any debts they may have had and were receiving all the benefits and financial grants (e.g. for clothing, furniture, household goods) to which they were entitled:

"...if they've got rent arrears, nine times out of ten we get them either on direct deductions or to sign a repayment agreement to pay the rent plus arrears...check their benefits as well 'cause a lot of time people aren't claiming what they're actually entitled to" (Project Worker#1).

Through the FSS this suggests that the state is not completely opting out of its responsibilities towards families:

"we do a lot of work around liaising with other agencies on their behalf. There's benefits agencies and also about ensuring just basic things like getting them to GPs and getting them referrals for specialist services like mental health services. Basi', we do a lot of



work around bringing in other support for them around specialist needs and making sure that they're getting what they're entitled to. So they'll do work around maximisation with them as well, making sure that they get *all* the benefits they're entitled to" (Project Manager#1).

### ***Signposting to welfare support agencies***

Furthermore, as well as assisting in the micromanagement of family life, project workers described how a large part of their job is ensuring that families are receiving support from external agencies and organisations to meet their welfare needs. This often meant registering families with a dentist/GP, as well as referrals to more specialist services such as mental health services, for example, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Project workers also described acting to co-ordinate and organise the intervention of a range of other services to address families' support needs which was seen as vital, particularly where individual family members might each have a set of problems that require the attention of different services:

"We support families to get the right level of support and intervention from other professionals, so that may be social services, that might be schools, it may be mental health services, health services and I think it's the role of the support worker to, to look at that, who's involved with the family and to make appropriate referrals and support the families to get that support, but it's also important that if there's a, an agency working with the family that's not necessary that, we dwindle those out and bring in the ones that they really need" (Project Manager#2).

“I think the main thing is that they will actually co-ordinate work...it's not just Charlotte who's got her issues, you know, we've got two of the lads have got ADHD, we've got the girl who is coping all right at the moment, but she probably won't be, it's just that she's not drawing as much attention as the others. What we probably would have had to do would be to look at the most appropriate referral for each of the individuals. The difficulty there, we would have been co-ordinating the workers to actually work together for the best interests of the family... seeing that everybody's working together makes a lot of difference” (HAS team).

For the referrer quoted above, this task of co-ordination was easier for a project like FSS since, given the low case load support workers deal with at any one time, they are able to research and seek out what support services are available that the family may be able to tap in to. Related to this, project workers also explained how they advocate and liaise with agencies on behalf of and with families, some of whom had fractious relations with those in authority or were distrustful of certain professionals such as social workers. Commonly, project workers described liaising regularly with housing organisations in relation to complaints of ASB and with schools due to problems with a child's education such as truancy:

“We find that with most of our families their kids are either not in school altogether or they're in school very little. So we, we would

liaise with the school, we'd have meetings up at the school, with parents and with the kid involved, and come to some agreement" (Project Worker#1).

Given this role, the FSS was very much reliant on relations with external agencies. The FSS was described not as a panacea for a family's problems but as one element in a multi-agency approach for supporting families with others services also playing a key role:

"The [FSS] may be an element, you know, they Youth Offending Team may have a role, there may be a role for our colleagues in attendance and assessment, in children and families section which we used to know as Social Services. Education would definitely have a role to play if the young person's under sixteen. So if we're not working together complementary to each other we're not actually serving that family and giving them a choice and a menu of services that they can have access to" (YOT officer).

Although driven by the objectives of ASB prevention, these intervention strategies arose from a broad understanding of the underpinning factors associated with the families alleged ASB and were initiated through what appeared to be good working relations between a range of service providers seemingly precipitated, in part, by the project's location within the LA. Indeed, addressing a wide range of health and welfare needs was seen as essential to ensuring the family desisted from behaviour deemed detrimental to the wider

community. This meant that the project shared objectives associated with other social policy domains.

### ***Informal techniques***

What may be described broadly as 'informal techniques' or processes (Prior, 2007) were also a key part of the intervention and existed alongside the more specific technologies discussed above. These techniques coalesced around the provision of emotional support, conversation, guidance, counselling and befriending. Project workers described how the approach to their work with families is founded on the development of trusting relationships, themselves built on values of being non-judgemental, respectful and honest. For one project manager this was about demonstrating to families that project staff are "on their side" something deemed to be important in gaining the trust of families who had often felt let down by other agencies:

"Not judging them like everybody else seems to have done. Yeah, being, I think being on their side because they're fighting against all t'other agencies that might have been involved. Everybody wants, you know, they're taking action or threatening to take t'kids or whatever they're threatening them with, and we go in on their side trying to help them sort it out, so I, yeah being there for them"  
(Project Manager#2)

"...whether it's good bad or indifferent, I will always be honest with them, and they really do respect that, I won't promise anybody anything that I can't deliver. If I say that I'm gonna do something I carry it through, even if it ends up with a negative result, I'll carry it



through, and I think that's how you build up the trust with them, because I think what you've got to bear in mind with a lot of these families is that they feel as though they've been let down in a lot of cases, very badly, by other agencies, and when you first go in there it's 'oh God, not another one', you know, so it's all about building up a relationship where you're fair and you're honest" (Project Worker#1).

However, as noted above, project workers endeavoured to strike a balance between an approach that ensured families feel that project workers are there to support them, alongside one described as "very strict and challenging" and "very, very honest, even if it's blunt and it might appear unkind". Project workers described this as taking a forthright approach with which they encourage families to acknowledge and take 'responsibility' for their behaviour.

"I've worked with agencies before, where they've been providing temporary support for people, you know, who are causing problems. A lot of the time I don't think they do the best, 'cause their services, 'cause they can be too soft about it, they won't be straight with their service users, you know: 'actually you are causing a problem and you are responsible and you've got to sort it out'. Rather than spend all the time focussing their energy and making excuses and you know trying to make sure that you don't take legal action against them, but that's not really going to help them in the long term" (Project Manager#1).

According to project workers, families appreciated this 'assertive' approach and they described having few problems building close, high-trust relationships. The first project manager explained, however, that this benevolent process perceived by families as 'befriending' is a necessary part of the project intervention. For the FSS to assess the families' needs and develop support plans, families are required to divulge personal information in order for project workers to appropriately focus their intervention:

"out of all the professionals that go in, our support workers have got the most time to give, that is one of the most valuable things that they can give, so they have got time to sit down and listen to them and a lot of our service users have not had that before so that's why they're gonna see it as a befriending relationship, but obviously part of our work is about gaining their trust and listening to them to try and identify what the causes of their problems are so that we can actually work on those. But they probably don't quite realise that that's the process going on. They just see it is as, 'they listened to me for an hour and a half while I went on about this and that' (Project Manager#1).

Given the importance placed on regular contact and building relationships of trust, a view was clearly expressed that the possession of a certain 'type' of personality was more important than professional qualifications. As opposed to possession of a professional knowledge-base, it was felt that "people skills" including the ability to be empathetic, patient and non-judgmental, as well as

assertive, were paramount qualities that project work required, rather than specific methods or ways of working:

"In my opinion and it's only my opinion, to be able to actually do a job like this, you've got to have some sort of life skills yourself to be able to understand the reasons why people get into certain situations in their life. I mean for instance the reasons why perhaps someone might stick with someone who's been abusive for years and years on end. If you can understand why that might happen then you've got a better chance of being able to relate to that client" (Project Worker#1).

"my personal view is that project workers don't need formal qualifications although, it would be nice for them to have some kind of formal qualification like an NVQ or something to recognise the hard work that they do, I think for me, it's more about their attitude and their personality, you have to be able to be challenging and feel comfortable about going into a family home and challenging at all different levels, if you can't do that there's no point in coming and working here... and also it's about being able to think outside the box a bit about what's gonna help the families, fit all that together and be as comfortable with working with the family setting, and the children and with a, professionals in a professional setting, so you'd, you'd have to be able to do both, and I think, you know, that skill, that's pretty skilled" (Project Manager#2).

In turn, this meant that project practices were not informed by any theoretical or practice models. No particular approaches to the models of assessment utilised and methods of support employed could be named. The only label that was applied to the approach was one described as “a common sense approach” (Project Manager#1):

“I don’t think there’s a set way to actually deal with it, it’s all about, using your common sense in dealing with a situation at that particular time” (Project Worker#1)

Normative questions must be asked, however, regarding whether this control strategy offers meaningful support when families are provided with regular contact whether they actively seek it or not (such questions are addressed in the next chapter). Indeed, project workers do not wait for families to contact them for support, although they do respond in crisis situations, but were clear that their role was to ensure the women engaged with the project and operated a practice model in which they regularly telephoned and visited each family (often daily) and were persistent in securing the families engagement; for instance, in situations where families were clearly reluctant to engage.

### ***Intensive intervention***

The fact that the project is an ever-present feature in families’ lives was theorised as being very positive from both the point of view of project staff and other local actors involved with the families. This was because of regular often transitory agency involvement of other agencies which does not facilitate



meaningful and consistent relationships nor allow for the sort of longer-term interventions that families were deemed to require:

"They're a link to the family, they stay with them. You know, I can get very involved with them and give them a lot of support, but I will leave those families as soon as they move out of the homeless tenancy, I don't keep involved, I refer on. But I think the families who've had a lot of dealings with lots of different agencies, just the fact that one worker will stay with them, be their worker, be there, support them, is an awful lot. I mean if you're looking at what is available now, statutory, family support, you're talking about a twelve week programme of support. That's nothing. You know, for families who have had chaos for quite a long time, twelve weeks will not turn anything round" (HAS team).

The frequency of the project support was also seen to be vital in helping families implement agreed programmes of work, particularly around initiating new methods parenting techniques with children who had not been used to adhering to rules and regulations:

"Because we know that if children aren't used to having boundaries put in place, to start putting boundaries in place, they'll kick off and they'll resist, because you're behaving differently, which they don't like...They're not used to being told 'this is the way it's going to be from now on and these are the consequences'. So to have that big eruption's quite common, but for somebody to

be there, you know, a listening ear, literally sitting on your shoulder whispering in your ear, saying 'it's okay this is to be expected, you're doing a good job, hang on in there', I think has made a huge difference to parents" (YOT manager).

"...and they went home and they were trying to impose these boundaries, and all hell would let loose, so they would phone our office in crisis, so we'd got staff who could go out, who knew them, who could stand with them and say, "yes, you know, do what your mum says", and encourage the mum to say, to stand her ground, and they needed that...if parents are starting to say "no" to, particularly their older kids, they needed some support to do that, because you know it did result in violence, a lot of wrecking of properties. Here you got a 14 year old son throwing furniture around the house, that isn't easy to deal with, that's quite intimidating, cos some of these lads are pretty big" (LA lead officer-01).

The capacity for the intensive intervention and the micro-management of domestic life is particularly acute for those families who live in the core residential accommodation. Yet, both project management staff and other actors were supportive of this element of the provision - described as "brilliant", "excellent" and "vital" - regarding it as necessary for some families who were perceived to either benefit from being 'removed' from their 'criminogenic' social networks and neighbourhood and/or who have such limited household

management skills that they require a much more intensive level of intervention for successful 're-education'.

"I think it's [the core] absolutely vital. There are families that do need that 24 hour support, they do need firm boundaries setting in place and without it people...That, you know, woman that I was talking about, she wouldn't have been able to come to the service because we needed to monitor her activity 24/7 so that her child wasn't taken away, and I also think that sometimes moving somebody away from the situation, giving them the tools and the support to actually do things in a different way, and then slowly moving them back into the community with added support is excellent way of doing it" (Project Manager#2).

"I think sometimes there is merit in taking a family away from the environment that they're in and sometimes by being able to take them to a Unit it's not as a punitive measure but simply to lift them away from that. They maybe, the lifestyle maybe that there's people coming that you want to stop" (ASB team manager).

Among those interviewed, there was little reflection on the important implications living in the core unit has for families' liberty. Indeed, severing families' links with their wider networks was expressly not considered to be a punitive measure. Quite the opposite; one interviewee described the core as being "rehabilitative" and somewhat recuperative since it is located in a leafy, affluent area of the city, an environment clearly regarded as 'desirable' and 'better'

than those that the families will have moved from (although of course once they exit the service, the families are unlikely to be able to remain in this area). The main concern expressed during interviews was how the FSS could ensure that the core unit was expanded beyond the three flats that comprised the residential element at the time:

“Interviewee 1: I’ve been to it...I thought it were brilliant, you know...I like the way that, you know, they can’t have visitors unless they, you know, they’re police checked and things like that, so they tend to then leave the past kinda thing, they don’t get involved in the past so much and people move on.

Interviewee 2: I think there should be more, definitely, bigger.

Interviewee 1: The problem is the core is so small, only three families at a time and they are priority, it tends to be priority on the ones that are probably homeless at the time, not the ones that are already in houses that maybe that you know[...] (ASB officers#2and3).

“I sat in on the interview and the woman from the Guardian said to her, “How did you feel when you came to this building?” and she said, “Oh it was like coming on holiday.” She said, “There were trees, it’s lovely” and I thought, ‘Oh isn’t that sad,’ you know I felt quite emotional about that and then this, we’ve got a woman with a baby, it’s the first time we’ve had that situation in the Core currently and she’s had a terrible past really and things are, she’s



been doing really well in the Core actually and she just loves the squirrels and she sits watching the squirrels and, and you can think, 'Well, you know part of this rehabilitation for them and it's also about giving them that break in a nice environment you know which they'd never almost had" (LA lead officer-02).

It was also suggested by the manager of the ASB unit within the ALMO who had previously worked as a social worker within a residential mother and baby home, that the idea of the core unit was not anything new but bore significant similarities to projects run by social services in the past. This suggests that the FSS is in some ways reminiscent of past social work interventions and may not represent a criminalisation of social policy (Rodger, 2008) but, rather, an example of what Prior (2007) has called the 'socialisation of criminal policy'.

"...twenty years round, we're back to where we were then except that that was run by Social Services and it was, it's main focus if you like was on, it used to be called the Mother and Baby Home and it had been open since the fifties and in the fifties the focus was on naughty girls that got pregnant out of marriage and that's where they got sent until the sort of late seventies, early eighties we had a very forward thinking principal who changed the whole ethos of it that it wasn't a home for naughty girls, it was a home for people that needed support parenting children to break the cycle of the children then becoming parents while they were still children and all that that brings, all the vulnerabilities and now what's

known as ASB which then hadn't got that tag..." (ASB team manager).

### **How are these rationalities translated into methods, strategies and technologies of government?**

Interviews with project staff revealed that there was some discrepancy between the 'theory' behind what the project does and what the support workers stated that they actually do. Although the project was described as 'challenging' etc, project workers reflected on the extent to which it was appropriate for them to make moral judgements about the behaviour, values and attitudes of families. In fact, project workers were clear that their assertive approach did not amount to an authoritarian attitude. Indeed, there was a recognition that the service provided involved the support worker entering the private space of the families' homes and intervening in their private lives and this, in itself, meant that project workers felt uncomfortable 'dictating' to families. This put boundaries around what it was deemed acceptable for project workers to 'challenge':

Q: So what does it mean to challenge a family, this word crops up all the time?

A: Being very honest and saying if that's unacceptable then saying what's unacceptable and not. We had a supporting people review a few years ago now and one of the questions they asked when they were interviewing staff was about challenging sort of racist or homophobic or sexist language and stuff. I said 'to be honest if there was anything like that in the office then we'd challenge it but

in people's homes it's not really appropriate', it's not" (Project Worker#3).

"Yeah you've got to be like understanding and a bit assertive but you can't go in and, and dictate to somebody what they're gonna do, well you have to but in a way that, you know, I mean with one of mine I've found if I go in and tell her what needs doing, explain why it needs to be done, and then come away and she does it, whereas professionals that have been with the family before, involved over the years, you know, have gone in and said, 'right, you've got to do this and this', and left her and she won't do it, you know. So I try, that approach I think apply to all mine and touch wood, I do quite well... I tend to look at it, these people have got themselves into a bit of a situation, maybe through no fault of their own, maybe just handling it, you know, differently than what they could have done, so for whatever reason they're there, and you've got to sort of go in, but you're going into their home, you know" (Project Worker#2).

"I don't know, because we're so in their face and in their homes we've got to, as much as we're perhaps trying to change what's going on in their homes we've got to be very flexible because we are in their homes and really in their lives dealing with some quite sensitive subjects. We've just got to be a bit flexible to what their needs are or what's going to work with them" (Project Worker#3).

In particular, directly dealing with behaviour defined as anti-social was described as a small part of the job as was utilising the threat of sanctions despite the approach of the FSS being described as 'twin-track':

"the emphasis certainly from my interview was a lot more about anti-social behaviour, about tackling anti-social behaviour, being quite, you know, challenging towards people's behaviour but I find that actually even though we're based round ASB is a very small part of my job...over the past few years have spent more time sort of attending hospital appointment, getting assessments of people, than I have actually, you know, been having discussions with them about, yeah, the anti-social behaviour. It definitely comes into it, but I think sort of the ASB team that's all about the ASB and the processes for the anti-social behaviour. Whereas my job tends to be spend more time talking to Social Services or whoever about child protection or dealing with schools etc. around education and all these kinds of root causes of anti-social behaviour" (Project Worker#3).

"It's supposed to be very much a sort of a twin track approach...But I've found that I've offered more in the way of support than, I mean support can be in itself quite challenging because a lot of the time it's, they don't want to recognise whether it's mental health problems or, you know, abuse issues and all these kind of things. So it can be quite challenging, confrontational while you are doing the more support part rather than the actual,



you know, chasing up the ASB evictions and those kind of things that are very rare to be honest of our families...I think if I just went into families and said, their home and said 'if you stop this behaviour we will evict you', that would solve absolutely nothing because they've been told that before, they've been told that by housing officers, they've been told that by social behaviour team, they've been told that by so many people and it's not solved their problems otherwise they wouldn't have come to us" (Project Worker#2).

Q: How often do you find that you're, you're having to resort to sort of enforcement approach?

A: It just varies with the family, not that often really, you know, the threat of enforcement is sometimes enough, without having to go down it, occasionally we've supported ASBOs being put on the children because often Mum is doing absolutely everything, well she's doing everything right and it's just not working, and she needs something a little bit more, you know, and having an ASBO may or may not work, but that's just that, that one step further (Project Manager#2).

Despite an emphasis on individual/familial responsabilisation and the core aim of the project to prevent ASB, project staff were also clear that 'success' included a range of factors and not just those that are defined in terms of criminogenic impact but in welfarist terms and with regard to outcomes more usually located within social policy domains.

"there are families that would have ended up being evicted and going back through the homeless route time and time again. I can't, I was just going to say, there are children who'd have gone into care. Conversely, there are children who may have stayed in abusive families as well" (LA lead officer-01).

Related to this, there was also a recognition that the project must be measured by taking due regard of 'softer' outcome measures. Describing how the project measures success one project manager explained:

"I think that you look at your hard outcomes which is, reduction in anti-social behaviour, you can look at education stats and how many people we've prevented becoming homeless, but that has to be in combination with some softer outcomes. I think you have to look at where the family are when they come in...sometimes you might work with somebody who's an ex-drug user who has gone on a drug treatment programme, who spent all day in bed, if you've got that person to stick to their drug treatment programme and they get up on a morning, that is a huge outcome...it's not being over-zealous about what you want to, to achieve, it's about looking at those small steps...success might be that, you know, a child's actually gone to school and stayed in school all day" (Project Manager#2).

One project worker was clearly cognisant of the fact that performance might be measured through whether families are in work but using an example of one family she was assisting, felt that this was not always a useful way in which to measure success:

"...he shouldn't be working 'cos of mental health problems...He's got personality disorder...he's having medication and seeing a psychiatrist seeing pretty much an entire team at [hospital]: occupational therapist, a psychiatrist that deals with his medication, a psychiatrist that's helping to put together care plans for everyday life, huge amount of work he's doing and really engaging with them, and that's the first time since he was about twelve that he's agreed to and engaged, which is brilliant but when it comes down to statistics he's no longer in training, which looks terrible, but actually his life, yeah, his life has improved tenfold since eighteen months ago" (Project Worker#3).

## **Discussion and conclusion**

Through an analysis of data derived from interviews with those who are involved in 'realising' the FSS (staff and partner agents) this chapter has analysed the project's governance rationale, how this is linked to the utilisation of particular techniques, and with that, how we understand the micro-physics of power inherent in the FSS. This focus on mentalities of rule herein is not, therefore, concerned with the extent to which discourse is an 'objective', 'truthful' or a representational one, but it is concerned with the performative aspects of discourse. This is founded on the assumption that discourse is

capable of possessing causal power, in that it has the capacity to produce that which it names and so has real effects on social practices (Sayer, 2000). The chapter has also been concerned therefore with examining, not just the ideological content of the FSS but its practical elements too: how power and control is exercised and with what purpose.

The research findings detailed above demonstrate that there is some consensus with regard to how staff and partner organisations define the policy 'problem' that the FSS sought to provide a solution to. Families referred to the project are viewed less as the 'problem families' that populate New Labour's ASB narrative, but rather as families *with* problems such that they are viewed as both 'dysfunctional' and 'deserving'. Indeed, families were invariably regarded as being 'in need' due to range of personal, economic and social factors that were thought to underpin the alleged nuisance behaviour. Related to this, the dominant ASB narrative promulgated by the government and the popular media was, often explicitly, resisted by project staff and viewed as demonising and unproductive.

Despite possessing a more nuanced understanding the casual factors lying behind the ASB which most interviewees agreed the families were responsible for, project staff conceptualised the role of the FSS as being about transforming them into active self-governing, responsibilised citizens in accordance with 'common sense' norms of 'good' parenting. The requirement for all parents to attend a parenting programme is evidence of a parent-blaming narrative in the response at the heart of the approach. The latter echoes the 'official' political rationality underpinning FIPs (Parr and Nixon, 2008), but also a wider set of



ASB and family support governmental strategies primarily concerned with promoting self-regulation (Rose, 2000; Flint, 2002, 2004; Gillies, 2005a). Furthermore, and echoing critiques of family support as punitive, the project was described as a 'challenging' and 'twin track' approach that (at least rhetorically) encompasses an explicit emphasis on the disciplining of those parents (essentially single-mothers who make up the majority of the families referred) who fail to 'engage' with strategies of responsabilisation. Critics suggest that this 'ethicopolitics' occurs at the expense of action on other more structural factors:

"...sometimes the immediate needs of children and families, and their circumstances in the here and now, are sacrificed on the altar of training for future opportunities. Child poverty is a problem now, and the social conditions that generate anti-social behaviour have an immediate impact that requires social policy designed to alleviate the misery of the present as much as prepare for the benefits of the future" (Rodger, 2008: 118).

However, while it can not be denied that the project does entail the surveillance and supervision of vulnerable and marginalised populations in their domestic private spaces, the project also contains a significant social welfare ethos based on finding long term sustainable solutions to individuals' problems, not least security of housing and income. The emphasis on individual responsibility does not therefore, in turn, allow the focus to shift away from social issues like poverty, health and education. What's more, with regard to the latter, rather than encouraging families to seek work and reinsert them into the lower reaches

of the labour market in order to re-establish the conditions for sustained capitalist accumulation, a greater emphasis was placed on ensuring that families were paying off any debts they may have and are receiving all the benefits and financial grants they are entitled to. There was no necessity to inculcate a work ethic. Whether project workers engage in regulatory practices that reinforce and perpetuate the goals of neo-liberal policy and ideologies is thus debatable. Moreover, it seemed that the punitive element of the service was often confined to rhetoric. According to the project workers, not only is recourse to the use or threat of legal sanction not common, they also reflected on their self-imposed limits regarding the extent to which they seek to exercise discipline within the private spaces of families receiving the service. Even further complicating the extent to which the project can be viewed as punitive, partner agents described utilising the FSS as an alternative to enforcement technologies and legal sanctions deemed to be both disciplinary and ineffective.

These research findings illustrate how the FSS appears to be a complex and contradictory intervention. It also reveals how the way in which a policy 'problem' is conceptualised does not lead straightforwardly to certain 'solutions', as is sometimes implied in governmentality literature particularly in analyses of 'official' policy texts. The process whereby governmental rationalities and technologies, as depicted in policy rhetoric (or talk) are realised on the ground is more complicated. Technologies do not flow in a logical, linear manner from conceptualisation of problems due to the influence of a range of intervening contingent factors and interests. In the FSS, the professional identity and expertise of the staff was one factor that seemed to narrow the focus of the intervention to that which is within their expertise to address. Since most of the

project staff were from a housing background, few had professional experience, qualifications or training in providing social care and support to families with high level needs. This appeared to limit what the project workers were able to offer families particularly in terms of the direct, one-to-one intervention provided to families (something discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight). A core part of the latter was primarily concerned with parenting 'education', household management and the provision of emotional support, perhaps at the neglect of approaches which take account of wider family circumstances and the broader environment. Thus, dealing with the consequences of, for instance, domestic violence which was acknowledged as prevalent among families referred, played little role, while being acknowledged as having had deleterious consequences for families. Thus, in adopting certain technologies, particular elements of the definition of the 'problem' were prioritised, suggesting that the exercise of power in the local setting is constrained in particular ways. In these circumstances, some families who already felt let down by inadequate welfare and family support services that they had received (or not) in the past, were offered family support intervention that failed to meet their expectations (See Chapter Eight).

The definition of the 'problem' as it was identified by staff and local agents might have lead to another type of strategy of intervention involving a different range of technologies of government had it been implemented in a different context. Had the project been staffed by an alternative set of professional actors, as has been the case in other locations where similar projects are led by experienced social workers, a different set of technologies of power and strategies of intervention may have been available to the project workers (Parr, 2008). Thus, although dominant discourses might be resisted, whether this 'resistance' has

any material effect on practice as 'technical means' is contingent. This makes assessing what kind of solution the FSS provides difficult (not least because we have yet to explore its impact on those families subject to it) but also because the governance of ASB at the heart of the FSS model is a complex practice that appears not to necessarily be straightforwardly punitive, reflecting the absence of a 'smooth' narrative typically found in policy texts (Edwards and Hughes, 2008).



## **Chapter Eight**

### **What kind of solution?**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter Eight focuses on the policy 'subjects' and is concerned with the impact of the FSS or what Ferguson (2007: 182) calls "the 'lived experience' of implementation". Earlier chapters have identified the ways in which the FSS may be understood as criminalising, punitive and authoritarian, particularly in the way in which the problem and project came to be defined, at least rhetorically, in terms of ASB and, further, in terms of the range of technologies of intervention at its disposal. Drawing on interviews with women receiving the service and agents involved with them, this chapter looks at how the FSS impacts on the lives of families referred and assesses the extent to which a disciplinary rhetoric and technologies are played out in practice. It explores what it is about the FSS that produces particular effects.

It is important to note that it is outwith the scope of this thesis to identify the impact of each element of the project. Furthermore, it is not the purpose of the thesis to ask whether the project 'works'. The thesis is not concerned with an analysis of outcomes associated with or the content and efficacy of particular technologies of power (for example, parenting skills training). This would require an exploration of the types of support strategies used with particular families, the skills and expertise of the project staff, and the existence of other

factors that may enable the project to 'work' in particular ways. Rather, the concern of this thesis is with more generalised analytical questions about how the project operates and how we might explain the role of the project in the governance of ASB. Therefore, in exploring families' views on the impact of the project, this section looks at how families experienced working with the project more generally, as opposed to teasing out and identifying the efficacy of particular elements of the intervention. As such, beliefs about the desirability and effects of the project, together with broad methods of working with parents are the main foci of discussion. The following research questions have guided this analysis:

- What were the families' circumstances at the point of referral?
- What changes occurred for the families during the research period?
- What impact did the FSS have on families receiving the intervention on a dispersed or outreach basis?
- What impact did the FSS have on families receiving the intervention in the core unit?

### **What were the families' circumstances at the point of referral?**

This first section is focused on exploring the families' situations when referred and how this impacted on their views and expectations about working with the project.

While some families acknowledged that the behaviour that had led them to be referred to the project was problematic in some way, families were acutely

aware of popular understandings of the concept of 'anti-social behaviour' and associated terms such as 'neighbours from hell'. Not surprisingly, they were keen to distance themselves from such labels due to their stigmatising and negative connotations. Indeed, the women found having the term 'anti-social' attributed to them deeply offensive and embarrassing. Those interviewed were clear that such a label, as it is formulated in popular discourse, did not reflect the complexity of the situations they found themselves in at the point of the referral and misrepresented them and their family circumstances. Notwithstanding this, the women did not reject the label *per se*. Indeed, many had also been victims of others 'anti-social behaviour'; they merely did not accept its application to themselves:

"it's not always as it is written, I mean we got like complaints against us, and one of the complaints was against me, and I think there, let's say there were twenty complaints, I can't remember how many there were, now 16 of them were the gang actually causing hassle outside my house, but because they were causing hassle outside my house, people reported it, you know what I mean. But I couldn't stop it[...]it was my responsibility, 'tell them to go', which I tried to do, believe me, I, I mean I went out and effed and blinded, and tried and fought them, some of them, but obviously it all came back to me...it was sort of 'give a dog a bad name'...they saw us as a problem family" (Cathy-01).

"Our Paul's got ADHD, him at fifteen, so he does do a lot of damage to t'property. Kicking off, banging doors. Not late at night, you know,

in t'day if he can't have his own way, and at fifteen I can't pin him down like I used to. So she hears all that obviously and reports it" (Helen-01).

"It annoys me in a way, it really does, because they're not bad kids. They are mouthy, I won't deny that. But they don't go out causing people grief. But when they're calling me, this is when it gets to 'em, do you know what I mean? Cos they're really protective over me, because their dad beat me for years and years, five stitches in me lip. They grew up with that. He used to tell them blood on the wall was paint, you know what I mean, so they've had a lot to live through and they don't want to see me getting hurt any more" (Sally-01).

The women interviewed were also cognisant that the dominant discourse around ASB essentially blames parents for children's disruptive and criminal behaviour. The women interviewed, however, rejected notions that the problems underlying their children's behaviour could be put simply down to 'poor' parenting and were at pains to explain how they had done all they could to control their children's behaviour and seek help to address the behavioural problems they too recognised. For some women, trying to control the behaviour of, often aggressive and sometimes violent, teenage sons was particularly difficult:

"Mark couldn't understand that he was, he's, he's still a kid and he has to abide by my rules. To him, he's no, you know, that "I'm fifte',



fourteen, I can do what I want, I can have a key to the house and I can come in when I want", you know, it were that what we was always arguing on, and the way he spoke, the way he spoke to me. I mean he'd even hit me once" (Louise-01).

"I were having a lot of trouble with my children and like my son were hitting" (Charlotte-01).

In two cases, women reported having identified problems with their children's behaviour at an early stage and reported repeatedly asking for support from authorities to help deal with behaviour that they had identified as increasingly worrying and which they were unable to control. However, as they explained that support was not forthcoming. Social services were singled out as being particularly blameworthy due to their restrictive eligibility criteria which prohibited them from providing the women with support:

"I mean I blame Social Services, do you know what I mean, before I even came in here [the residential unit]I asked them for help and they were like basically "Your kids are not at risk, we can't do anything really" (Cathy-03).

The women interviewed did not take lightly the complaints being made against them nor the associated threats of legal action from their landlords. All found their situations prior to referral extremely distressing and worrying, and described prior attempts to resolve and deal with the complaints being made against them. However, all felt that once they were labelled 'anti-social',

officials responsible for taking action against ASB, such as housing officers, were often unwilling to listen to their side of the story and they were often left feeling vulnerable and let down by authorities, particularly when they too had been subjected to others harmful behaviour:

“So I’m trying to get my point over, she didn’t want to know really. She wouldn’t even listen, she kept butting in when I were talking, ‘Oh, we’ve heard this and we’ve heard that.’ So I left it at that, and then I got another letter a couple of week ago...and they said they were seeking possession on us. I’ve got a year” (Helen-01).

“nowt got done for me when I complained...I even, it even got to stage where I thought, “Oh I’ve had enough of this, I need to move”, but would they give me, would they give me thingy to move, no. No, they wouldn’t let me move. I wanted to move and start afresh. But they wouldn’t do it” (Louise-01).

Contributing to the behaviour that both the women themselves, as well as professional actors, identified as problematic, but also impinging on the women’s abilities to cope with this behaviour, were a range of personal, familial and structural factors. All women were unemployed, had debts and were living in high-crime and relatively deprived areas of the city. Five of the six women had mental health problems all of whom were being prescribed anti-depressants. Two of these women were also suffering from additional mental health conditions including self-harm and obsessive compulsive disorder. Two women had attempted suicide in the past. A number of family members also

suffered debilitating physical health problems and the father in Family 4 was disabled. Domestic violence was prevalent across all of the six families with three of the six women having been the victim of intimate partner violence. In two families, teenage sons had assaulted their mothers, while in one family children had been physically abused by their father. Children in the families also had a range of welfare support needs with three children in two families diagnosed with ADHD and three having other emotional, mental or behavioural problems with one child attending a special needs school as a result. Many of the children had additional schooling problems such as being bullied, frequent unauthorised absences, special educational needs and low attainment. A number of families/family members had also been the victims of serious criminal offences (which were often related to allegations of ASB) including criminal damage, sexual assault and robbery:

"...it's something that I've lived with, and I've learned to live with, but I was raped there by a gang right, and my son was in hospital, as a warning to me not to take it any further with the police. I mean from day one moving in there, the kids were searched, the mobiles robbed off them, and do you know what I mean? For three years we put up with so much, you would not believe...And James got, he sort of like got roped in with t'gang and I understand why he did, because it was sort of like, if he got roped in with them, then he didn't get the hassle...So it was, it was hard for us all really" (Cathy-01).

Reinforcing the views of actors involved with the families, the women described how their circumstances when referred to the project had often reached crisis point. Four families were homeless when they were referred, three of whom had fled violence and were living in safe houses/temporary accommodation. These four families faced the prospect of being found intentionally homeless and the damaging consequences that come with it, including the possibility of children being taken into care and family breakdown. The other two families were facing the prospect of homelessness having been issued with Notices of Seeking Possession by their landlord. Given these distressing circumstances, on the one hand, all the women described being willing and, to an extent, happy to accept a referral to the FSS as they were all more or less desperate for support from any source to help them stabilise and improve their situations. On the other hand, some of the women were also understandably apprehensive due to their limited knowledge about the FSS, and were concerned about the 'contractual' nature of the intervention and to what exactly they were signing up to:

"Q: So, when you were first referred to the project, how did you feel about being referred?

A: A bit, well, a bit worried, actually, I thought, 'Oh my Gosh, I don't know what...' Because, you've got to like agree to do things like, agree to like, I don't know, you've got to be there at a certain time, or, check, they'll have spot checks, I thought, 'Well, they're coming to check I've got kids in bed' and all this, you know, I were getting a bit worried, like, you know, I think, 'Oh, they might be coming to check that I've cooked tea, and I might've been having a really bad



day and I haven't done it no tea, then they're gonna think, well, you can't look after your family right, cause you haven't cooked any tea"  
(Fran-01).

It appeared to be the case that those women who were themselves, or had children who were, subject to legal tools (e.g. ASBOs) to address criminal or ASB, and/or had multiple agency involvement were more wary of the extent to which the project was there solely to 'support' them and expressed far more anxiety about getting involved with the project. This was perhaps a result of the level of surveillance they were already under from a range of services and they worried that project workers would also be concerned primarily with regulating/monitoring their behaviour.

### **What were families' experiences of working with the project?**

As might be expected, although there were commonalities, the six women's experiences of the project differed significantly, and their perceptions about its impact and utility appeared to be, at least in part, dependent on their particular circumstances. This section begins with a brief overview of the circumstances of the women when they were last interviewed<sup>18</sup> before going on to consider their experiences of the project in more depth.

At the time of their final interview, all but one of the five families suggested that they were happy they had received a service from the FSS and felt that things

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<sup>18</sup> Family five have been excluded from the remainder of the analysis as it was not possible to maintain contact with this family and as such they were only interviewed once when first referred to the project. Of the other cases three families (1, 2 and 3) were interviewed on three occasions, whilst families 4 and 5 were interviewed on two occasions.

would have been worse had they not been referred. In all but one case the project was experienced as having had at least a relatively benign or actively positive impact. Indeed, three of the five women felt that without the intervention of the project, more negative, detrimental consequences would have occurred for them and their children, including eviction, family break up or acute mental illness. For two families, their situations had improved radically over the course of the research, while others were still struggling to cope in difficult circumstances and two were still the subject of complaints. Brief details of the families' situation at the point when fieldwork was completed in 2007 are provided below:

- The project evicted **Family 3 (Fran)** from the dispersed property they had been allocated to and which was managed by the FSS due to ongoing complaints about the behaviour of three of her children all of whom were subject to ASBOs. At the time of the third interview, the family were homeless and living in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation. One of the children in the family was in a young offenders institute due to a breach of his ASBO.
- **Family 4 (Helen)** avoided eviction and were living in a new property that the project had helped them secure in a different area of the city. Although there had been some improvements, complaints about the family's conduct continued.
- **Family 6 (Louise)** were in much the same situation. The family had not been evicted from their home, but the eldest son had received a second custodial sentence and was in a young offender's institute.

- Only Families 1 (Cathy) and 2 (Charlotte) who had both lived in the core unit were in circumstances described by both the women and other agencies involved with them as much improved compared to when they were first referred to the project. The project was felt to have been instrumental in helping these women achieve positive change.

Each family's 'pathway' during the period of the research is explored in more detail below and the role of the project is teased out. The experiences of the women who were supported on an outreach and dispersed tenancy basis are explored first and then the views of those living in core residential accommodation are considered separately. This is because the kind of support provided by the project varies significantly across these two models of provision, with the intensity and frequency of contact much greater for those living in residential accommodation. Moreover, it is the latter that has more frequently been criticised as punitive and draconian on account of the rules and regulations that come with this model of support. Given that it was only possible to interview five women, their experiences are unique and as such the analysis presented below discusses the experiences of individual families in some detail (where possible, generalisations are made).

### ***Family three: Living in 'dispersed' accommodation***

The circumstances for family three at the time of our final encounter was perhaps the most negative. Family three consisted of mum (Fran), her three teenage sons (aged 13 and above) and three daughters all aged less than 10 years old. They were homeless and living in temporary emergency accommodation at the point they were referred to the project. They had been advised to flee their property on the advice of the police for fears regarding the



family's safety. The family had been the target of local vigilante action after the three boys were 'named and shamed' in the local press. The latter had been granted ASBOs due to verbal abuse and harassment of local residents, firing air rifles, lighting fires, graffiti, groups of friends congregating at the family home playing loud music, drinking and allegedly taking drugs. The family had also been served with a Notice of Seeking Possession (NSP). Although the behaviour of the three sons was a problem and they were regularly absent from school, the three girls attended school and were doing well but there was concern that Fran, who was suffering from a long-term health problem and whose own mother was dying from cancer, was unable/unwilling to control the behaviour of her sons and that this was having a damaging impact on the three girls who were beginning to turn up late for school and were sometimes left under the (inadequate) supervision of the boys. As such, social services were involved with the family. Following "credible" threats from local residents eager to ensure the family were forced to leave the neighbourhood, the police advised the housing authority to move the family to emergency accommodation. At this point, the family were referred to the FSS by an ASB officer and were offered support in dispersed accommodation managed by the project:

...at the end of the day she, you know, she had to accept she was the parent and it was her responsibility to sort it out. And to get her back on track she needed some support and quite intensive support (ASB officer#1).

When interviewed, Fran described feeling very anxious about getting involved with the project and was particularly worried that project workers were primarily



concerned with monitoring her conduct and judging her ability as a mother – something she felt subjected to already through her contact with social services. In fact, the family had numerous services and agencies involved with them and Fran found it very difficult managing the demands of each, whilst coping with her own and her mother's illness. This was recognised by the YOT manager who was involved with the family throughout their time with the project:

"The first time I saw Fran...[she]was sat with her mum who was very ill, dying from cancer at the time, which we didn't know how ill she was, and Fran was sat, she had a baseball cap on, pulled down, her body language, she was almost folded inside herself, mum was sat there being quite vocal, because she's supporting her daughter - this is her child they're talking about - and there were I think at least thirty people in that room, there were representatives from the FSS, from social services, from the police, from various, because there were six children, there was different education establishments represented there" (YOT manager).

Fran described her initial feelings when first referred to the project in the following terms:

"It's just I was so worried, that, I was so, the people in my life, I've just got so many people in me life, it's social workers, support workers everyone coming to see me, and, I thought, "Oh my Gosh, it's even more and more stress, you know, people coming to check on me." That's what I were thinking, I'm thinking, "How, if they see

how I am when I'm right, right bad, they're gonna think, "Oh my Gosh, that lady can't hardly carry on." You know, cause I was really bad, and I couldn't hardly carry on" (Fran-01).

The family's social services and other agency involvement compounded a feeling that project workers were part of a larger governing framework concerned with monitoring her performance as a mother. Indeed, Fran felt that she had to "prove" to project workers that she was coping, to prevent them informing social services and any legal consequences that would potentially follow. The 'contractual' nature of the intervention and the consequences that may befall her should she fail to meet her side of the agreement was a constant pressure and worry for Fran particularly as she sometimes felt less able to 'perform' in the way project workers demanded due to a long-term health condition:

"if I had any major problems, and [project worker] thought I wasn't coping, she'd tell social services, so still, I could, worry, you know, say if I was, getting really ill and I couldn't, cope any longer, then she has to tell them, you know, 'We'll come and take all of your children.' I worry about that, gosh, it's very, I'm just struggling to get myself better" (Fran-01)

"The [project] do work with the social services, and like if they see owt, like that's not supposed to be, then they report it to the social services, social services get involved straightaway" (Fran-01)

Furthermore, Fran's anxiety about the FSS meant that her Support Plan was less negotiated and somewhat imposed by project workers as she felt powerless to disagree with their suggestions:

Q: And how's it decided what will be in that plan?

A: I think it's the, support worker, I think she decides, I don't know if anyone else in the office decides with her, as well, I'm not sure, I haven't asked that...she says if there's anything that you don't agree with, you know, but I always do agree with it (Fran-01)

In a second interview with Fran, once she had been working with the project for some months, she suggested that her anxieties had lessened and that she had grown more trustful of the project workers who had tried to help her get the boys back into school as well as increase her income:

"She like took me to the doctors and, she's, getting me on sick, which I don't want to do, I said, 'I don't want to go on sick...I don't want to be scrounging off', you know, you want to be well, I'd rather go back to work. But, she said, you know, "you are ill" (Fran-02).

However, Fran still found aspects of the intervention problematic. She explained how the project worker's attempts to micromanage domestic life had been particularly stressful for her and she drew attention to how she found it difficult to demonstrate the way she disciplines her children under the gaze of the project workers. This was something that, for her, was clearly a private matter that should not be publically scrutinised:

“...Cos kids always do that don’t they, show you up. Oh god, and I don’t like telling them off when they’re [project workers] in, like sometimes he gets right gobby...they can’t be going on, you know, can’t be going off like that and I don’t like to tell him off, when they’ve gone I’m going mad at him, saying ‘why the hell do you go off like that? you know, you can’t be talking to people like that,’ but they’re here I’ll just say ‘Shut up now [name]’ but it’ll be ‘you’re not really doing much to control him’, I don’t like showing myself up in front of her [project worker], I’ll wait till they’ve gone...I’ll wait till they’ve gone then sort it out in private...’cause I don’t like an audience” (Fran-01).

Fran also explained how she had struggled to implement the behaviour management strategies recommended by the project workers that had actually culminated in further arguments and confrontations with her teenage sons:

“At one point they said like cut their money down to so and so, so I had to do that and that was hard. You know, cos they were getting £2 a day and said well cut ‘em down to, give em, just give ‘em, I forgot what she said now so much a week, and then rest if you get ‘em to do jobs round house and the earn it, so we’re doing all that, we did that (laughs) and now I’ve had to cut their money down completely. So that’s like almost impossible...it’s more stress for me, kicking off and swearing and shouting and bloody chucking stuff round house” (Fran-02).



Fran also stated plainly that she did not enjoy or want to attend the parenting course to which the project had referred her due to her health complaint. She was, however, compelled to go and felt that the project workers did not sympathise with her illness, despite the fact she had been formally diagnosed, was on medication and was regularly visiting a consultant:

"it's just when they tell me to do things...and I say, 'I feel so dizzy, and I want I don't want to go,' you know, 'You can do it, you can do it', but I say 'no, you don't know how I feel', so, you know, 'just walking down street's really hard for me sometimes, you don't know what it feels like to be like this, you haven't got it', you know...(Fran-01).

Although not always made explicit, there was a sense during a number of the interviews (including those with Fran) that women found aspects of the project, particularly the project workers persistence in ensuring they completed certain tasks (such as attendance on a parenting course) somewhat frustrating. It might also be hypothesised that, perhaps because many of the families were accustomed to the presence of professional agencies in their lives, there seemed to be an acceptance of, rather than explicit resistance to, the project's constant involvement in their daily private lives, despite an implicit suggestion that such involvement was not entirely helpful:

"I get an early morning call every morning at 20 past 7, cos I'm up at 6 o'clock every morning...To make sure I'm up for the kids in the morning. I says 'I'm up at 6 every morning. I don't need a wake up,'

but they still phone, even on the school holidays. I said 'The kids are off school this week,' he says 'Oh are they? I ain't got no kids' he says 'I didn't realise.' I keep telling them I'm up at 6 o'clock in the morning. It's good, just in case you do overlay, but I've always awaked at that time" (Fran-01).

The women arguably had little agency to resist these constraints on their liberty, fearful of what the consequences of non-compliance might be.

A major influencing factor on Fran's experience of the project derived from the fact that the family were living in dispersed accommodation which meant that the project effectively acted as her landlord. Although project staff have no powers themselves to initiate civil or criminal charges against families, they do, however, have the power to evict families from dispersed properties and the core residential unit since they retain housing management responsibilities for these. Furthermore, project staff work closely with partner agencies who do have the jurisdiction to apply for legal mechanisms. Due to continued problems associated with her sons' behaviour, in their housing management role the FSS were threatening Fran with eviction at the time the second interview was conducted. Further, given that three children in the family were on ASBOs when referred, and given the project's essential remit to reduce ASB, a key part of the project's intervention was ensuring that the children stuck to the terms and conditions of their ASBOs. In these circumstances, it became clear how the project played a significant role in the governance of ASB as enacted through enforcement measures. Indeed, the project staff applied pressure on

Fran to control the behaviour of her teenage sons and take active responsibility in ensuring that they met the terms of their ASBOs:

"they tell me like, if they're not in on time, I've got to phone up and report them missing not just let them get away with it, otherwise it would be like I'm not doing anything about it" (Fran-01).

It seemed that project workers did intervene in a somewhat disciplinary manner in this case and, contrary to the Government's claims, it appeared that 'support' backed up by the threat of 'enforcement' was not conducive to positive change for Fran. Although perhaps reflecting the projects stated 'twin track' approach, this dual role of support and enforcement was clearly in conflict and it was understandably problematic for Fran to develop a trusting relationship with project workers who were also threatening her with enforcement action and homelessness. As such, Fran worried about the rationale for project workers' visits, who sometimes visited in pairs, something she found particularly oppressive:

"I'm a bit worried thinking what they actually coming for today actually, two of 'em!" (Fran-02).

Fran's worries were in fact not misplaced. At the point when the third interview was carried out, the family had been evicted by the FSS from their property due to the behaviour of the three boys outwith the family home but also due to damage they had caused to the property. One son had received a custodial sentence for breach of his ASBO and was in a young offenders institute, while

the rest of the family were living in temporary accommodation. One son was staying with a grandparent and the remaining family members (mum, one son and three daughters) were living in one room at a bed and breakfast awaiting a decision on whether the family would be found intentionally homeless. The family displayed remarkable resilience in these patently bleak circumstances. Thus, in relation to living in a bed and breakfast with her family separated, no cooking facilities and four children living in one room, Fran claimed that:

A: It's all right. People are all right...It's a nice room. It's a nice place, yeah.

Q: So have you got, are you having to sort of live in one room?

A: Yeah it's all in one room, yeah so that is with, with oldest, you know with the son in the room, that's a bit, you know. We've got us own shower that's good, a little shower...

[...]

Q: So things aren't too bad at the B&B?

A: No they could be much worse so not too bad at all. I mean there's no alcoholics or druggies in there or owt like that (Fran-03).

Fran described, however, how she felt her eviction was unwarranted and that she and her daughters, who had settled into the local community and a nearby school, were being punished for the behaviour of her three sons who, despite her best efforts, she had little control over:

"I think I did everything I could to like, you know. They've got all me notes down like when I've phoned the Police [to inform them her



sons had breached their ASBO]... So I don't think I've made myself intentionally homeless, I don't cos I wanted to stop there, I liked it there. I'd got really nice friends on that landing" (Fran-03).

Fran added that the property itself had actually been too small for her family and that this contributed to the boys problematic behaviour: her three teenage sons were sharing one bedroom with only a single chest of drawers between them to accommodate their belongings as no more furniture would fit in the room, something that was likely to have exacerbated problems within the home. A YOT manager involved with the family agreed that the action taken by the FSS was extreme and somewhat "draconian" given that, in her view, the boys' behaviour had been improving, they were attending all their YOT appointments and progress was being made. Moreover, the YOT manager also drew attention to the fact that the boys had not been found a place in the local school when the family were moved into the dispersed accommodation which was located on the other side of the city. Thus, while the project held Fran primarily responsible for her sons' behaviour, the comments of the YOT manager below suggest that other agencies should have perhaps been held accountable for their own lack of responsibility towards the family:

"When Fran became a tenant with the [FSS] she did, I feel, in my opinion, she did start buying into what was being offered, although it was very difficult. It's very easy for myself or any other staff to say things to Fran, give suggestions to her, but we're not there twenty-four seven, we don't have to take any of the backlash, we walk away from that, but she did get all three of the younger girls into [name]

school of her own volition, and they did start taking part in community activities in the new area and did start settling really well. The boys still chose to migrate back to [neighbourhood where their ASBO restricted them from visiting] and I don't want to condemn my colleagues in the education system but I'm very dismayed at how long it took for Carl and Brandon to be offered an education place. There was no real, in my opinion, no real effort made for a controlled move from [neighbourhood] to the other side of the city. Had that happened quicker, if they got the ASBO in the June, had they by September been allocated an education case on the other side of the city, we may be able to start integrating them into the community. I can't guarantee that would have happened, but at least it would have been a stepping stone" (YOT manager).

Once the family had been evicted, the FSS withdrew their intervention and closed the case. As such, although apparently coping reasonably well, Fran was left with little support. Perhaps not surprisingly she suggested that if she were referred again she would not accept the support of the FSS:

"I thought, 'Ooh what if they give me, you know like give me one of these places you've got to have them coming round,' and I thought, 'No I don't want it actually, I've been all right on me own haven't I all these last so many months so...cos sometimes they would come round and I think, 'Oh no I was planning on going out today and he's coming to see me, I don't feel like talking to him,' you know...I'm not

really bothered now, no I don't, no I've been doing all right on me own" (Fran-03).

#### ***Families 4 and 6: Families receiving outreach support***

Families 4 and 6 were also supported on an outreach basis, although did not live in dispersed tenancies managed by the project. They were not homeless or at immediate risk of eviction when referred to the project, and remained in their own homes where project workers visited them on a regular basis. Family six, mum (Louise), daughter and son (Mark, aged 15) were referred due to the behaviour of Mark who was engaged in both anti-social and criminal behaviour, and had been excluded from school for non-attendance. Louise admitted that Mark's behaviour was, and had been for a long time, outwith her control. As noted above, Louise had sought help from social services on a number of occasions but had not received any intervention due to her son not being deemed 'at risk' in any way:

"When he was about twelve he started getting in, getting into a lot of trouble, pinching, mainly, and we had a few appearances in court, I tried, I tried getting social services involved, involved with me...Only thing I got out of them is, 'he's not a child at risk, he's well looked, he's well looked after, he's fed and clothed, he's not neglected[...]I were absolutely crying out" (Louise-01).

When referred, the family were not at serious risk of eviction although had received warnings from their social landlord. Furthermore, while the other families who agreed to take part in the research could be described as having

multiple and complex support needs, in family six and aside from the problems associated with Mark's behaviour, this family's life was characterised by a level of stability in that the family had no debts or rent arrears, nobody in the family was suffering from any reported health related problems, Louise was working part-time and her daughter was attending school regularly with no concerns. In this case, and in contrast to the worries felt by Fran, Louise did not feel anxious in any way by the prospect of becoming involved with the FSS. Indeed, the family did not have a great deal of agency involvement and she did not feel 'policed' and overwhelmed by authorities intervening in her private life. She also welcomed the prospect of support in a context where she was also socially isolated; Louise had no friends in the neighbourhood, in part, due to the behaviour of her son, and did not have any close family.

"I never bothered with me neighbours beforehand. In fact I couldn't tell you any of my neighbour's names, cause I just keep myself to myself and I don't know whether it's because I won't mix, because they're them type of people what's in and out of each other's houses and sit all day talking on each other's backs and I, I won't do, I won't do that, and I won't let anybody know my business as these like, you know, like to know your business and I'm, I'm not like that, I just keep myself to myself" (Louise-01).

In fact, Louise was eager to receive any support that might help prevent her son from engaging in further criminal/ASB and assist her in finding him a place in a local school. Beyond this, there were no other welfare support needs that either the project staff or Louise could identify as being in need of attention.



At the time the first interview was carried out with Louise, the family's case had already been formally closed by the project and deemed 'unsuccessful' since Mark was not willing to 'engage' with the project workers and they were unable to curb his offending behaviour.

"Well I suppose they did as much as they could but Mark just wouldn't, you know. No matter what they said and offered him he just, just no, no, no don't wanna know" (Louise-01).

Indeed, during the period that the project was working with the family, Mark repeatedly breached the terms of his ASBO, received a supervision order and was sent to a Young Offenders Institute. When the second interview was conducted, the family's situation was much the same and Mark had received a second custodial sentence in relation to a serious assault.

Despite the apparent 'failure' of the project to help the family achieve the outcome Louise was seeking, she professed to having benefited from the intervention of her project worker. The emotional support project workers offered was seen as vital in helping her cope with the stress of her circumstances, in particular, Mark's frequent court appearances:

"...there were many a time I just used to phone [project worker] up when I were in tears and I just, I just needed to talk.

Q: So what do you think would have happened if you hadn't been referred to the project?

A: I think I'd have had a breakdown...I'd a finished up in hospital I know that, 'cause of stress and everything what were going on" (Louise-01).

This demonstrates how the role of the FSS in the governance of ASB, is to a significant degree determined by the skills of the project workers, the individual circumstances of the family referred and the level of involvement of other agencies. In this particular family context, the impact of the project appeared to be relatively benign and any potentially criminalising powers were effectively neutralised. Indeed, Mark was already enmeshed in the criminal justice system and so the intervention of the project did not have a detrimental impact by way of the imposition of punitive sanctions. Nor was the project particularly focussed on ensuring Louise effectively monitored Mark's ASBO since Louise was already actively engaged in doing so:

"I mean, one of his conditions of his ASBO was that he wasn't allowed to come on [name] Road and if he was on [name] Road, he had to be supervised by me. So if he wanted to go to the shop or go to catch bus, I had to go with him and I had to meet him off the bus, which was stupid because it put such...I were dragging our Laura out with me, if any, if he wanted to go anywhere because he couldn't come within like circle of this area...So I had to go back to court to get that lifted" (Louise-01).

In this case, the project's remit was centred essentially on working directly with Mark and attempting to prevent his anti-social/criminal offending, indeed, on the

effective 'rehabilitation' of a repeat offender. It is perhaps unlikely, however, that those staffing the project, who were not social care professionals, were in the position to effect such change. It seemed that the extent of their intervention with Mark was the provision of diversionary activities which Mark showed no interest in taking part in. Arguably, staff perhaps did not possess the knowledge and skills required to make in-roads in this difficult case:

"I mean they, they did trips in the holidays and what things Mark could have gone on, but he didn't, he just wouldn't, he didn't want to know, I mean, they took, they took, well, 'cause Mark wouldn't go, they started taking our Laura. I mean they took her to adventure centres, Cleethorpes, you know all, bowling, skating, all sorts in the holiday times which Mark could have gone on, but he wouldn't" (Louise-01).

In this case, and while not wishing to undermine the importance of this for Louise, the only thing the project could offer was the provision of emotional support as well as a place on a parenting course. Although the latter was viewed as inappropriate by Louise due to Mark's age:

A: ....I mean it was, it was somebody to talk, talk to. I mean I went on a coupla parenting courses, not that I thought they did any, any good.

Q: You don't think they were very useful?

A: No.

Q: For any particular reason?

A: well, I mean, they were just talking about setting out boundaries and things like that, well it, it's hard when you've got a bloomin' 15 year old lad...like I say, they were just, they were just here for me to talk, talk to mainly (Louise-02).

Asked how she would rate the project on a scale of 1 to 10, Louise gave the project a mark of six:

Q: On a scale of one to 10, nought being 'useless' and 10 being 'couldn't be better', how would you rate the project?

A: "six...like I say, they were just, they were just here for me to talk, talk to mainly (Louise-02).

When referred, family 4 consisted of mum (Helen), dad and four sons who all lived in the same household but also an elder daughter who lived close by, together with her three children who all spent a great deal of time at the family home. The family were referred because of complaints associated with the behaviour of the family as a whole, including arguments, loud music and groups congregating and drinking at the property, as well as the behaviour (some criminal in nature) of the elder sons around the estate where the family lived (property damage, drunken behaviour, stealing cars and driving without a license). Family 4 were extremely impoverished and fractured with complex, wide-ranging needs associated with family violence, significant mental and physical ill-health problems, very poor housing conditions, and strained relations with external agencies. At referral, two sons had ABCs and ASBO warnings in place, while two had criminal charges in relation to driving offences. One of the



sons had ADHD and learning difficulties and attended a special needs school. Dad had suffered a series of heart attacks and strokes in the recent past and had been left disabled and with a severe speech impediment. The family's home was in an extreme state of disrepair due, in part, to damage caused during the son's aggressive outbursts but also due to the father living exclusively downstairs due to his inability to climb stairs, despite the absence of bathroom facilities. The landlord had recently refused to carry out repairs to the property due to unpaid charges and because of the increasingly poor condition of the property which repair workers had refused to work in. Plans to rehouse the family on the grounds that they required a more suitable property for the father had also been suspended due to the NSP, continued ASB complaints and rent arrears:

"We were looking to try and get the family re-homed in another part of the estate, another part of [the city], due to needing a more suitable property for Dad. The problem we've got there is obviously they've got quite a lot of nuisance cases open against them and they owe a lot of rent arrears...She's got previous rent arrears and she's also got over £2000 worth of re-charges from repairs that we've had to do because one of the sons has wrecked the house" (ASB officer#2).

During interviews, Helen appeared both assertive and confident, more so than other research participants, and less obviously in need of general emotional or moral support, and associated help such as project workers liaising on the family's behalf. This was also, in part, because she denied many of the claims

made against the family, suggesting that they were being singled out and scapegoated by one malicious neighbour - in fact, numerous complaints from many different local residents had been made about the family. Since the family denied the complaints made about them, they were initially unhappy at being referred to the FSS, but also accepted that they required all the help they could get and needed "somebody on their side". From the point of view of Helen, the purpose of the project was to help them secure a new tenancy, get repairs carried out on the house and assist the family in refuting the complaints of ASB. In the first interview, as none of these had yet occurred, the mother expressed negative views of the FSS:

"Q: Do you feel like the project's helped you in any way, helped you deal with all of this?

A: No, not really... nowt's getting done. It's as though they're leaving it" (Helen-01)

Q: So are they helping you to try and move?

A: No. I mean we need to move obviously for obvious reasons. He needs a toilet downstairs, he can't get upstairs to get in t'shower or owt like that. So I'm doing it, I'm seeing to him...it's as though I'm sat waiting for 'em to say, "Right, that's it, you're out next year, that's it."

That's how I feel. I'm just waiting for it to happen" (Helen-01)

However, Helen did speak highly of the project worker with whom she had built a good rapport:

"I like [project worker], I must admit, I do like [project worker]...She does listen well, she will speak, she'll come and she'll speak to you. Kids'll speak to her and she's right down to earth" (Helen-01).

Although the family already had some social services involvement in relation to one of the children, their project worker pushed for social services to carry out additional risk assessments of the other children, something that Helen was not happy about as she did not consider her children to be in need of social work intervention. However, the project worker managed this in a sensitive manner and in a way that did not result in her being alienated from the family, although all the children were eventually placed on the child protection register:

"I don't think they really got the attention that they needed, I don't think anybody actually went out and, as much as they should have, you know, and it was [project worker], I think [project worker] actually fought to get 'em on the child protection register. And all four of them went on...all went on the child protection register...they've had nearly a year on child protection register" (ASB officer#2).

By the second interview the family's project worker had helped ensure that the family were rehoused into a newly furnished property on the other side of the city, where the eldest daughter could no longer visit regularly. At this point, in Helen's opinion, the project had achieved its purpose and she was ready for her case to be closed. Helen stated: "I've got what I wanted" and little else could be derived from this interview at this point. As explained in Chapter Five, Helen seemed reluctant to take part in the conversation and the restrictive influence of

other family members rendered the interview somewhat unproductive. Notwithstanding this, Helen was more positive about the project and the children's worker who had been assigned specifically to work with her youngest son. She also suggested that it was a good thing that they had been referred to the FSS but that her case was now ready to be closed and she seemed happy to cease contact with the project.

Following this brief period of stability, when the family's case was indeed about to be closed as complaints had ceased, their situation deteriorated. Problems began again after Helen's daughter was also relocated to the same area. This gave rise to a similar set of problems that had occurred at the family's previous address. In addition, the daughter regularly left her young children with Helen, who found it difficult to manage them as well as her youngest son, who has severe behavioural problems. Due to continued complaints, a NSP was served and because of child protection concerns Helen's grandchildren were taken into LA care. Complaints about ASB intensified as Helen's two sons moved back home and the elder daughter began spending even more time there. At the time fieldwork was completed, the family had fled from their property due to a serious dispute with neighbours and fears for their own safety. They were living in temporary interim accommodation awaiting a decision regarding rehousing. Sadly, the father died of a heart attack soon after. Two of the children were also remanded in custody for stealing a car.

From the point of view of Helen, while the project worker's help in getting the family rehoused seemed to be significant, more broadly, the project appeared to have little impact. Helen did not describe feeling stigmatised or labelled in any



way by the project workers, in fact, she got on well with the project worker assigned to her case. The project worker did not therefore appear to be an unwelcome presence in the family's life, even though the project workers pushed for social services involvement. Echoing Fran's circumstances, family 4 were in frequent contact with a range of agencies and although not explicitly stated, agency-family relations seemed to be marked by a level of disengagement and disempowerment brought about by a constant examination of the family by an array of 'governmental authorities' from a range of institutions and agencies, such that there seemed to be a resigned acceptance of the project in their lives.

From the point of view of the FSS staff and other agencies involved with the family, Helen was not the fully engaged 'active agent' that the project demanded. Indeed, the family were unable to 'self-regulate' and change their conduct, and Helen was not able or willing to 'adequately' discipline her family and meet her responsibilities towards the wider community. It is beyond the scope of the thesis to explore in detail the impact of the project in this case, particularly with the influence of a wide range of other factors/agencies. Suffice to say, however, that the entrenched levels of dysfunction and vulnerability in this particular family seemed to make engagement with a programme of work and the attainment of an eventual positive and sustainable 'solution' somewhat unlikely. It seemed that the material context of this family's life was characterised by such a long history of extreme and deep-rooted personal, familial, social and economic disadvantage and associated levels of anger, frustration and alienation, that helping them and finding a solution was very difficult:

“...on the last meeting I had with Social Services and FSS and YISP, I’ve never had such a negative meeting because everybody felt that they’d give everything and it had all reverted back to how it was in the first place, if not worse...it had gone full circle and as I say, worse and all the agencies felt that they couldn’t offer any more than they’d already offered” (ASB officer#3).

One of the ASB officers working with the family described the mother in passive terms as “blasé” and uncaring and as a consequence believed she had not dealt effectively with the behaviour of her youngest son, the threats to her home and the prospect of her grandchildren being taken into care:

A2: she’s definitely one of life’s victims and, and, and this hasn’t helped. But she didn’t do anything to help herself either...she wasn’t taking any responsibility for anything and all the boundaries that had been set, set out, she’d not even tried to keep to them (ASB officer#3).

Yet, in the same interview it was acknowledged that Helen’s ability to achieve change was constrained by ongoing domestic violence she suffered from her husband and the abusive behaviour of her children which rendered her somewhat “powerless”. Indeed, in many ways, despite being assertive and confident towards external agencies, the mother appeared to be disempowered within the family. Helen’s case represents how, in some instances, the challenge for intensive family support to effect positive change, even in

partnership with a range of other agencies, is immense. It seems that the odds were effectively stacked against Helen and her family long before they were referred to the FSS.

### ***Families 1 and 2: Living in the core unit***

Families one and two were in the most stable and positive circumstances when the fieldwork was completed. Both of these families also reported the most positive experience of working with the FSS. Unexpectedly, however, both of these families were supported in the core unit. The core unit consists of three large flats contained within a very large Victorian house. Families living in this property have a temporary and non-secure tenancy and have to adhere to strict rules and regulations as stipulated by the project. This aspect of intensive family support has proved controversial as core units amount to an institutionalised and, some would say, authoritarian existence. However, the extent to which the women living in this accommodation found it authoritarian and repressive is complex. Perhaps surprisingly, although they draw attention to the drawbacks of the core unit, neither women depicted the project in wholly negative terms. This was, in part, because both women were homeless at the point when they were referred to the project and were in extremely vulnerable and distressing situations. Not only were the women dealing the consequences of homelessness but both also had various additional complex problems and needs that they were struggling to cope with.

Cathy is a single mother with four children aged from 12 to 18. Prior to starting to work with the project, the family had a troubled history. The family had been homeless on a number of occasions previously as a result of domestic violence. Cathy suffered from obsessive compulsive disorder and severe depression.



Two of the children had been diagnosed with ADHD, one had been excluded from school, while the other, who also suffered from a debilitating bone disease, was very withdrawn and had displayed suicidal tendencies:

"Two of the children had been referred to the CAMHS team in the past...they'd been diagnosed with attention deficit disorder...It became apparent after talking with Cathy that she had been in a homeless situation before. She also had had many, many years of domestic abuse...the children were not actually on school register... Cathy had been in one of the women's refuges in [City] for a long, long time...she had herself had quite an abusive childhood...I think Cathy actually herself has been depressed for many, many years" (HAS Team).

Prior to the referral, the two eldest boys had become closely involved with a criminal gang operating on the estate where the family lived and the family were the subject of numerous complaints about gang fights, noisy threatening and abusive behaviour, and criminal damage. Gang warfare resulted in the family becoming the target of retaliatory action involving criminal damage, intimidation, and burglaries, culminating in a horrific violent incident during which Cathy was raped and her son assaulted and hospitalised. At this point the family moved into emergency refuge accommodation in a nearby town. The family were subsequently evicted from their LA secure tenancy as a result of rent arrears and at the point of referral to the FSS were living in temporary Bed and Breakfast accommodation. All of Cathy's school-aged children were out of



education. Initially, Cathy was very reluctant to accept a residential place with the project, but felt she had no choice.

Family 2 consisted of Charlotte and her three children. They were homeless at the point of referral having been evicted from their home on grounds of rent arrears. Charlotte had severe mental health problems (depression and self-harming) and was an alcoholic. The family had been homeless previously due to Charlotte fleeing domestic violence.

"She'd suffered domestic abuse...she had a history of domestic abuse and depression. When she was only three years old she witnessed her sister die in a fire...She'd taken overdoses. The father of one of the sons had been abusive towards her, which she thought in turn had led to this particular son becoming abusive himself. I mean he'd been diagnosed as having behavioural problems. He had actually physically attacked Mrs Smith on several occasions himself. The domestic violence unit at [name]Police Station had been involved with the family. There was even an incident where her son had actually shot at her...There'd been social services involvement as well in the past, and they'd been referred to an education family support worker" (Homelessness Officer).

Given the circumstances these two women were in when referred, both had few options open to them and, as such, neither had any real choice about whether to accept the intervention of the project and move into the core unit. In these

circumstances, the offer of support, the provision of a home and, in turn, the evasion of other potentially adverse consequences including family break-up was welcomed by both women. As perverse as it may seem, because of the extremely traumatic events that the family had endured prior the referral, the security of the core unit, rather than feeling oppressive, actually allowed Cathy to feel safe:

"being here is honestly, one of the best things that's ever happened and I don't think I could go on without having support here. I mean I feel safe...If I'd have gone back into t'council and got just a normal house, the gang, I mean, I went to [neighbourhood] once a couple of months ago, as soon as I walked in there I was spat on, shouted at, do you get me...they said they'd find me wherever I went, now they can't do that here, cos there's security cameras...I don't know what I would have done, I think, I'd had enough by then. And I think that, I have got a lot of fight in me but I'd, I'd had enough" (Cathy-01).

"When I first come here I couldn't sleep at night, do you know what I mean, I'm too excited because I love the house and do you know what I mean it's great. It were like coming to home" (Cathy-01).

However, the families' experiences of their time living in the core were somewhat complex. On the one hand, and particularly during the first interview, the two women were clearly grateful for the support they were receiving and both professed to being greatly relieved that they had been referred and thus had shelter. Had they not been, both felt that they were likely to have found

themselves in circumstances far worse. Despite these positive assessments by the women, suggesting that the core is not, therefore, problematic in any way does not automatically follow. Rather than these claims necessarily being a sign of the essentially beneficial nature of the service, it is perhaps only testament to the level of insecurity felt by the women and the possible neglect that the families had received from statutory agencies that these women were happy to accept an intervention that brought with it intimate levels of surveillance; there might well have been a preferable alternative. Furthermore, the authoritarian nature of the core unit was, however, revealed during the course of the fieldwork even during the initial interview. The women made it clear that it was outwith their choice to leave without negative consequences - leaving the core unit would mean that they were essentially making themselves intentionally homeless. There were other indications too that the women found living in the core oppressive. They both expressed irritation with regard to the restrictions living in the residential accommodation placed on their freedom, in particular, having to home by 10.00pm. Cathy and Charlotte also described how their teenage children found the rules hard to live by and had found relocating to the area difficult as they had no friends in the neighbourhood:

“...his [Cathy’s son] curfew’s ten as well and he wanted to be able to stop out at weekends till twelve...But because of him kicking off before he actually came in here, you know what I mean, and all that, it was took away from him, like a reward thing, so now he's got to earn that. He has got a problem with that” (Cathy-01).

"I were looking forward to it at first, because I thought that I'd be able to get better. But I, I think I've been here long enough" (Charlotte-01).

"...and [son], he, I don't think he likes it much because he's in t'house after school, because there's no-one for him to play with. He gets a bit bored and then he gets a bit stropky with me" (Charlotte -01).

Notwithstanding this, neither Cathy nor Charlotte overtly resisted these constraints on their liberty. A sense of a willing acceptance of these regulations, some of which were arguably infantilising, defined the tone of the interviews:

"It's all right but it's, there's too many rules...They're not really strict. I mean, like I have to be in for ten o'clock. But I mean I don't mind that in t'week" (Charlotte -01).

"The only thing that I feel might become an issue...is that I have to be in for ten as such. But to me at the moment like I say it, I'm not bothered 'cause I don't really go anywhere. I got invited to me friends engagement party and I asked them whether or not I could stop out and they said I could stop out till half eleven if I want so, do you know what I mean? They did worry in case that would be an issue with me but it isn't. Maybe it might come up sometime but I actually just feel safe and okay so, you know what I mean? I think



that might be the obvious thing, but I mean there's got to be rules"  
(Cathy-01).

The convivial and non-punitive approach adopted by the project workers seemed to contribute to the women's largely positive assessment of the core unit. The relationships of trust built between the women and their project worker seemed to work to soften the strict rules and regulations associated with living in this accommodation and meant that they did not view the core unit as being overtly punitive<sup>19</sup>. The fact that project workers get to know the family very well and develop high levels of trust did seem to counter criticism that the project acted as a penetrating technique of surveillance. Somewhat unexpectedly, Charlotte suggested that the project workers "don't interfere in my life" and only provide the support she requires. Particularly important to Cathy and Charlotte was the fact that the project workers did not judge them despite them being labelled as anti-social by other agencies:

"The good thing is that when people come like, when people come and talk to you and they know for well that you've had all these labels and that you've had all these things written against you, but when they come to talk to you, you don't, it doesn't come across that they think that you're anti social. They, they came across as like, 'We're here to help you'" (Cathy-02).

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<sup>19</sup> It is also important to note that despite assurances that their confidentiality would be maintained and that they should feel free to be critical if they wished, the women may well have felt reluctant to be critical of the core unit, particularly since they did have good relations with the staff who ran it.

"...that's what they say you see, "Whatever you've done, right, we're starting from scratch, we'll start from day one, we're gonna do this, we're gonna do this, and we'll work together" and that's, that's it, we work together. And we did, w worked together... It's just the people themselves, they're just, you know, I don't know...they're all brilliant, do you know what I mean? They're brill" (Cathy-03).

This lack of an explicit concern with the families' ASB was probably, in part, due to the absence of enforcement action being in place when the referral was made and no complaints of ASB being made whilst the family were being supported by the project. Thus, from the point of view of both Cathy and Charlotte, the project did not feel like it was about the containment of ASB. In fact, Charlotte did not seem to be aware that she was referred to the project primarily due to alleged ASB:

"A: Well they did a review to see if I'd made myself intentionally homeless. But at the time I was having bad depression, so they said the only way I could be re-housed was if I went on the project, cos I was self harming and...

Q: Oh I see, right. The way I understood the project, I thought that they were set up for families that had been accused of ASB. Was that the case with you?

A: No, no.

Q: That's my misunderstanding then.

A: There was a bit of ASB, with my son and that like, tormenting the neighbours and that, but I, there weren't anything brought up, like I mean I got evicted for my rent arrears.

Q: Right, and not ASB?

A: Yeah.

Q: And you were offered this because it was more about you needing support?

A: Yeah" (Charlotte-01).

These women also felt that project workers did not impose support plans on them but that aims and objectives were negotiated and that their opinions were heard. This contractual agreement was voluntarily accepted, therefore, and appeared to be built on mutually-satisfying terms. Both women felt that the project workers listened to them and valued their opinion, and they were variously described as friends or "like part of the family" and viewed as acting in the family's best interests. There was a particular emphasis on the project workers role in providing 'emotional' (therapeutic) support, which was defined as: being a good listener; someone to talk to; a shoulder to cry on. Together with their availability and accessibility, this 'befriending' role was valued highly and accrued advantages to the women who were susceptible to social isolation and depression, something Cathy acknowledged:

"I haven't got a family as such and you know what I mean? No support like that so maybe it's that that I look for, I don't know... My family, I mean they disowned me years ago" (Cathy-01).

Over the course of the research period, Cathy and Charlotte did become increasingly frustrated with living in the core block. When interviewed for the second time, and this time professing less enthusiastically that living in the residential accommodation had “not been too bad”, Charlotte had wanted to leave the residential accommodation for some time but the project had been unable to secure suitable alternative housing. She was clearly frustrated that she had not been able to move out sooner having been living in the accommodation for almost two years. Interestingly, Charlotte explained, during this interview how the project had referred her to a mental health professional and that he had diagnosed her depression as being directly related to living in the core unit. However, Charlotte disagreed with this assessment explaining that she had been depressed before moving into the core. This does suggest, however, that her time living in the core unit perhaps did not have a positive impact on her mental health.

During the second interview with Cathy, the family's circumstances had stabilised and they were deemed by the project to be nearing the point when they should be moving out of the core unit. In contrast to Charlotte, however, Cathy expressed distress at the prospect of moving out:

“...and then that's when they have to say to you, 'look we really do think it is time you moved on'. I were crying, do you know what I mean, and I made [project worker] feel upset and everything but it was a good thing because it shows that I was moving on...I didn't want to go, because I, like, because I sort of made friends like with workers and that. It's like leaving your friends behind, and because



like, you know, it sort of a long time since I've really made any friends, that I've trusted anybody" (Cathy-02).

It was only during the third interview that Cathy, still living in the residential accommodation, talked about the difficulties associated with living there and the complexities of knowing that the project workers are there to help, but finding the lack of privacy problematic. Indeed, Cathy's views of the core unit had shifted and living within the confines of the unit was becoming increasingly stifling:

"...I want to [move out] yeah because like some of the things that like, it didn't bother me before which had help me feel safe, now I feel restricted...It made me feel so safe you see before, but now you see that I feel, I must feel a bit more confident to go out and about" (Cathy-03).

"The weirdest part is about, I mean the, the worst and the best part is, is that the workers are lovely and I don't see 'em as like, but sometimes I suppose when they come up and I'm busy doing something it irritates me that like I've got to let them in really. But they are really nice and do you know what I mean?" (Cathy-03).

Despite some reservations about the core, both families felt that the support provided by the project had been beneficial and neither regretted having been referred. Not surprisingly, the key benefit of working with the project for these women was preventing them becoming homeless and helping them find new

secure accommodation. Beyond this, however, both Cathy and Charlotte described a number of aspects of working with the project that they found helpful. This included help finding school places for Cathy's children, help liaising with school teachers to reintegrate Charlotte's daughter into school after truanting due to bullying, help accessing health care including GPs, counselling and a child psychologist, as well as support in managing mental and physical health concerns including helping Charlotte address her alcohol misuse:

"like she [project worker] got my daughter back into school. She were off two year and we've just got her back in school and she's settled" (Charlotte-01).

In contrast to Louise and Fran, Cathy found the parenting training provided by the project particularly useful:

"we had like a family discussion and we like brought things up at family discussion and I learnt to realise that, you know, I had to listen to them [her children], do you know what I mean, sometimes they did have a point, and that I didn't have to control, as in control 'em like everything I say is god type of thing, it's, do you know what I mean? But then I had to, instead of shouting 'em down about it, we discussed it...and at, you might think at first 'parenting'! oh they like challenge you and say 'You're not a proper parent' but I'd, honestly I would recommend anybody... I mean everybody should have it, seriously because teenagers, nobody can ever prepare you for teenagers" (Cathy-03).

Both Charlotte and Cathy suggested that the FSS was crucial in raising their levels of self-esteem and confidence and, in turn, helping them to achieve personal goals such as gaining employment:

“...what they’ve actually done here is made me feel good about meself. I’ve never felt good about meself for a long time, you know, in anything with the kids, nothing. But you see, that’s, that’s why I say, I even had the confidence to go for a job, because I felt that I was worth to get a job and you know, I could do this and I could that. And I wouldn’t have thought none of that before. I felt like I was a piece of shit, really. That’s how, you know, that’s how I was labelled and I felt like it” (Cathy-02)

“I’ve got more confidence, I feel stronger” (Charlotte-02).

Although feeling ready to move out, in her third interview, Cathy remained adamant that moving into the core had been the right thing for her and that many of the positive change she and her family had made would not have happened otherwise. For her the 24/7 support had been invaluable:

“I wanted somebody to just sort me life out for me. I didn’t want, I didn’t feel strong to do anything. You know, I really didn’t. I just wanted somebody to, to, I wanted to be a robot I think and just somebody to tell me what to do every minute of day, what to do with the kids, what to do with me, what to do with this, you know what I

mean? It's bad really. I wanted someone to do that. I think I wanted to go back to, I mean, I wanted to, I hadn't had a good childhood, yeah, I think I wanted to be mothered and take all responsibility off me. I couldn't cope at all" (Cathy-02).

When Charlotte was interviewed for the third time she and her family had moved out of the core and were living in a secure tenancy. In this interview, and despite still being grateful for the support they had received, she did admit more readily that she found the rules hard to live and the restriction somewhat unfair. However, she also stated that she would have like her case to have remained open and to have continued receiving the visits from the project workers whose presence in her life she welcomed and missed:

Q: So what was it like living in the core?

A: It were all right but it were just, there were a lot of rules and regulations.

Q: And how did you feel about sort of having to live by rules and regulations? Was it difficult?

A: Yeah (Charlotte-03).

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Chapter Eight has asked questions about the effects of governing ASB through intensive family support by analysing the empirical reality through which the policy rationale is enacted, particularly in its impact on families receiving the FSS intervention. As Chapters Six and Seven have illustrated, at the discursive and practice level, the project does encompass a quasi-punitive identity and



does not, therefore, represent an entirely counter-punitive tendency in the governance of ASB. The project is 'offence focussed' and proceeds on the basis that the family has 'done wrong'. As such, support is conditional and provided to those identified as having what might be described as 'criminogenic needs' with the intention of initiating moral responsibility (Gillies, 2005a; Muncie, 2006; Robinson, 2008). Moreover, those committing the most ASB receive the highest intensity of intervention (as long as they appear to be 'engaging'), at the expense of those who might be homeless but pose no 'risk' and who, therefore, merit lower levels of intervention. Furthermore, by its very structure, the project has the power to make families homeless, and through their close working relations with partner agencies, also has the capacity to influence/support the imposition of non-housing legal sanctions. Failure to self-regulate results, therefore, in the imposition of legal sanctions and/or the withdrawal of support. Indeed, through her sons' failure to self-regulate their negative behaviour, Fran and her family were evicted from the home provided by the FSS and left with no support, living in bed and breakfast accommodation. The project also has additional coercive powers experienced, in particular, by those families living in the core residential accommodation whose liberty is subject to extreme restrictions. The lack of explicit criticism about the residential element expressed by the women living therein perhaps says more about the fact that Cathy and Charlotte were homeless when referred, had no better alternative, were fearful of what the future might hold otherwise and were, therefore, largely grateful and relieved to have shelter and a sense of safety that had been missing in their lives. It was within a context of extreme desolation that the project and its core unit was 'welcomed' by these women. It is not surprising, therefore, that the families eventually tired of the rules and regulations.

Notwithstanding these elements of the project that might rightly be described as disciplinary, the project does not represent a straightforwardly punitive project nor is it simply concerned with ensuring that families exercise responsible self-government. The influence of different discourses and associated technologies such as those more commonly associated with social policy is visible through the project's focus on improving the health, education, housing and income of families referred (as already discussed in Chapter Seven) such that the approach of the project was multi-dimensional (Prior, 2007). In contrast to how Gillies (2005a) defines the current era of family support as a project of re-socialisation that neglects the primary origin of class and disregards the impact of poverty, insecurity and poor living conditions, the FSS does seem concerned with the wider factors that make parenting and a stable family life difficult. While certainly not suggesting that the project is a panacea, change occurred for families not just in their way of thinking and lifestyles (responsibilisation) but in their social context. Structural and other constraints were not ignored by project workers. Indeed, the project helped some family's use available services to meet their physical and mental health needs, to obtain financial help in the form of benefits and/or grants, and to access and maintain better quality housing. They also ensured children were reintegrated into schools and provided young people with a range of diversionary activities to aid their personal development. For the two families who lived in the core and were homeless at the point of referral, the project workers essentially helped them build a new life.

As other studies of family support services have found (Pinnock and Evans, 2008; Gray, 2009b), some of the women interviewed particularly valued the

trusting relationships built with project workers and the practical help provided. This was especially pertinent for the women both because of their status as single mothers, who were alienated from neighbours and had no other support networks, but also because they were suffering from depression. This highlights the importance of taking due regard of the motivation, agency and approach of local service providers. Whilst it may be argued that family support interventions are located within a wider mode of governance grounded in moral responsibility based on middle-class norms of behaviour which pathologise working-class parenting, it appears that most of the women valued the lack of moral judgements made by (usually working class) project workers. For Louise, Cathy and Charlotte, in particular, the project worker made an enormous difference to the women interviewed. These women also felt that their views and opinions were given credence and that they were not passive participants in the intervention process. Furthermore, while the role of the FSS can be seen as potentially contributing towards the disciplining of parents (particularly women) grounded in normative assumptions about what constitutes successful parenting (Gillies, 2005a), it is important to note that the women interviewed sometimes saw themselves as in need of professional assistance and advice to acquire certain parenting capabilities and to effectively influence family behaviour and development. The women and project workers often agreed on the assessment of 'the problem' and 'the solution'. It is easy to suggest that these activities represent 'tough love' or an iron fist in a velvet glove, and that the project is wrong in principle, because it smacks of social engineering targeted on vulnerable members of the community, but to take this view would be to deny support to the likes of Cathy and Charlotte that they seemed to both want and need.



The extent to which the FSS has a positive, punitive or relatively benign impact, however, crucially depends on a number of contextual factors, not least the extent to which the family admit they have 'done wrong' and want to/are able to self-govern, whether the family are supported on a dispersed, outreach or core basis, the point at which the family are referred, and related to this, whether it is in the hands of the project to employ legal sanctions together with the skills and expertise of the project workers. For instance, in the case of Fran, there was a fundamental contradiction between the role of the project workers as 'help-givers' and housing officers responsible for enforcing compliance with her tenancy agreement. Furthermore, like many of New Labour's family support policies (Gillies, 2005a) and particularly those built on methods of contractual governance, the FSS is founded on a model of the ethically reflexive agent, with individuals assumed to be able to negotiate and transcend obstacles in their path by exploiting opportunities, developing skills and managing risk. However, such an approach places an emphasis on human agency and discounts a social reality in which personal responsibility in determining life chances is constrained by a range of external, relational and subjective factors, which warrant bleak prospects for those who are depressed, have learning difficulties, or who simply live life on a day to-day basis. This is something Prior (2007) found in his evaluation of a family support project. In this research too, it seemed the challenge for the FSS, in its bid to identify and negate existing, deeply entrenched sources of socially destructive power and replace them with positive, personally and socially constructive sources for Louise and her family was particularly great and, in this case, was not achievable.



To conclude, it seems that the FSS is received differently and has a different impact according to the needs and contextual circumstances of the families referred. Where families are already subject to the 'disciplinary' gaze of a range of agencies, and where women are not able to regulate their children's behaviour, the extent to which the project has a stigmatising impact is heightened. It is in these cases where the project appears to be more explicitly entangled in the governance of ASB through enforcement. On the other hand, where mothers are already deemed to be appropriately active and 'responsible' subjects, the project is welcomed and offers tangible benefits to those referred. The FSS is therefore an ambiguous, complex and contradictory intervention that simultaneously controls but also makes attempts at empowering families.

## Chapter Nine

### Conclusion

This thesis has sought to analyse and make sense of the role of intensive family support in the governance of ASB in England and Wales. The choice of this research topic was initially driven by the author's participation in a three-year evaluation (January 2004 – January 2007) of six 'intensive family support projects'. The evaluation was externally funded by the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now the Department for Communities and Local Government) and the findings published in three publicly available reports (Nixon *et al*, 2006a.,2006b.,2008). The motivation to undertake doctoral research about the role of these interventions was stimulated by a scepticism about the apparently benevolent nature of the projects which were formulated as part of a widely condemned ASB agenda and which sought to control the conduct of 'problem families', some of whom were expected to relinquish basic freedoms by moving into residential units and accept being subjected to the near constant scrutiny of project staff. It seemed that the governing processes and practices associated with this type of intervention required deeper examination. As such, the data collected as part of the evaluation was (re)interrogated with questions in mind that were informed by a range critical literature (reviewed in Chapters Three and Four). Three broad aims underpinned and directed the research:

- How is intensive family support placed in the wider ASB policy field?
- Is intensive family support a positive and beneficial or damaging and repressive form of intervention?

- How are power and control exercised in intensive family support projects and with what purpose?

In seeking to answer these research questions, analytical attention has been focused on the development and implementation of one case study intensive family support project aimed at reducing ASB among families who are homeless or at risk of eviction on account of their conduct. The principal interest has not been in determining the meaning and causes of 'ASB' nor the 'success' of intensive family support projects on their own terms, but in the processes by which ASB is governed through family 'support' and the wider implications of this for those receiving the intervention. This concluding chapter summarises the main research findings reported in previous chapters and highlights the original contribution the thesis has for academic and policy communities. It also points to the limitations of the thesis and suggests areas where further research is required.

### **Locating intensive family support in the wider policy context**

The thesis began by outlining the rise of the ASB policy agenda which New Labour politicians have championed since the mid-1990s and throughout their 12 years in power. It set out how a range of theoretical and ideological assumptions grounded in communitarianism, risk factor analysis, left realism, the broken windows thesis and theories of the underclass have underpinned the policy field and legitimated a focus on the 'problem family' as the key source of the problem of ASB, and the site and vehicle for solutions. Continuing trends that can be traced back to at least the post-war period that have sought to

reform the 'problem family', this has led to (primarily working class) families and parents, usually mothers, being targeted by a range of ASB prevention technologies designed to inculcate a shift in patterns of behaviour. Chapter One also described how the centre-staging of 'problem' families in New Labour's ASB agenda echoes developments in other policy domains beyond crime control which has given rise to a well established 'parenting support industry' (Moran *et al*, 2004) which aims to deal not only with ASB but poverty, social exclusion and disadvantage as well (Rodger, 2008). In 2006, the unremitting focus on 'problem families' and inadequate parenting culminated in proposals to 'roll out' a national programme of FIPs providing an intensive level of 'support' to the 'most challenging' families as part of the Government's RAP.

It is within this wider political context that the FSS, which has been the focus of this thesis, was established in January 2003.

### **Evidence from the evaluative and academic literature on the role of family support**

Chapters Three and Four drew on academic and evaluative literature to provide a discussion of how we might understand and explain intensive family support in the governance of ASB. In so doing, the chapter set out how Government-funded evaluations (Dillane *et al*, 2001; Nixon *et al*, 2006a, 2006b, 2008; White *et al*, 2008; Pawson *et al*, 2009) have disseminated a message that, generally speaking, intensive family support represents an effective and beneficial model of intervention that families appreciate. This literature was juxtaposed, however, to that of critical commentators who have drawn attention to a number of reasons why we should be wary of the alleged benefits which family support



may offer. These critiques have conceptualised intensive family support negatively as authoritarian programmes of re-training, targeting the most vulnerable (Gillies, 2005a), as encompassing punitive and stigmatising technologies (Garrett, 2007) that are illustrative of a creeping criminalisation of social policy (Rodger, 2008), and as instances of contractual governance (Crawford, 2003). It is also claimed that both the more 'supportive' and explicitly punitive interventions into family life, are representative of a mode of governance grounded in moral responsibility and aimed at ensuring families become self-reliant, meet their obligations and take greater accountability for social and economic ills. In turn, it is argued that family 'support' interventions assume a capacity for self-determination that ignores the material and structural contexts that shape families' lives.

Notwithstanding the incisive nature of the insights contained within the critical literature reviewed in Chapter Three, these substantive theories, in and of themselves, did not offer a coherent theoretical and explanatory framework for understanding the role of intensive family support in the governance of ASB. As such, in Chapter Four, these academic critiques were situated more firmly within two 'general' theories (Frauley, 2007) of governance, namely political economy and post-Foucauldian governmentality perspectives in order to strengthen their explanatory capacity. In offering distinct ways of conceptualising power, and the genesis and evolution of ASB policy, these two approaches provide a robust framework for understanding intensive family support as: moral regulation; the micromanagement of daily life; criminalising, punitive and stigmatising; and a form of contractual governance.

Generally speaking, governmentality approaches help to explain the *how* of family support and the governance of ASB, while political economy approaches seek to explain the *why* of such interventions and ASB policy more broadly. The latter prioritises state power as a crucial site of strategic action and connects ASB policy to capitalist class relations (Coleman, 2004). In problematising ASB policy as an exercise in securing the conditions for capital accumulation strategies, this narrative provides a theoretical frame that sees intensive family support as a punitive (Drakeford and McCarthy, 2000; Goldson and Jamieson, 2002; Jamieson, 2005) and repressive state apparatus centred on the activities of the powerless and marginalised, and as part of a social investment state (Lister, 2005). Governmentality approaches study power in situ, where it is exercised over individuals. They seek to diagnose how the 'problem' of ASB and its perpetrators are both rationalised intellectually and linguistically as governable problems (e.g. as 'failing' mothers), and how this is linked to certain technologies of intervention, such as responsibilising and remoralising strategies (Flint, 2004.,2006; Gillies, 2005a; Parr and Nixon, 2008). Work located in this field also connects the governance of ASB, and, in particular, family support, to broader changes in neo-liberal governance processes at a macro-level characterised by the rolling back of state intervention, multi-agency working, and technologies of the self whereby private citizens are required to act as responsibilised actors in managing ASB. The thesis is built on an appreciation of the value of keeping both approaches in view (Clarke, 2005); the two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive but have a different orientation towards the issue of ASB.

The approach taken in this thesis is one, therefore, that has found a theoretical point of departure in substantive theories about intensive family support and more general theories about how power and control operate in the governance of conduct. The value of this approach is that it recognises that one theoretical framework can not answer every question. Instead, following critical realism, it argues that different theories provide ways of viewing reality that offer a set of instruments/resources that can be used to develop research questions or analysis in concrete investigations (Danermark *et al*, 2002).

### **The thesis methodology**

In order to explore the research questions at the heart of the thesis, 35 interviews with project staff, actors from a range of 'partner' agencies and families on the receiving end of the intervention were carried out between 2003 and 2007. All of these were tape recorded and transcribed, and the data analysis process guided by Layder's (1998) adaptive theory.

The methodology foregrounded philosophical concerns by making clear its critical realist underpinnings. This philosophical position acknowledges the existence of a social reality and causal powers that exist independently of our knowledge of them (Sayer, 1992). In turn, this suggests that there is an underlying truth about the social causes and effects of the research object under study (in this case about intensive family support) that is amenable to explanation (Danermark *et al*, 1997; Dobson, 2001). While acknowledging that absolute knowledge of reality is impossible, this position nevertheless seeks to provide explanatory accounts on which credible, authoritative pronouncements can be made which can seek to influence the direction of social policy (Edwards



and Sheptycki, 2009). When it comes to analysing data, this position brings with it a belief that research participants' accounts can be judged against an objective reality (Sayer, 2000). In the research, this meant not always accepting interviewees accounts as straightforward 'evidence' but 'reconstituting' their experiences through sociological conceptualisation and theorising. As such, I chose not to 'validate' my findings with those who took part in the research. This decision brings with it complex ethical dilemmas that I have not been able to explore and resolve fully in the thesis and which demand further attention from academics, particularly those hoping to influence policy. Indeed, the thesis raises questions about how to balance approaches which stress the central role of participants' knowledge particularly those 'labelled' and whose voices are not readily heard with the 'expert' knowledge of the researcher. As Edwards and Sheptycki (2009) have asked, to what extent should researchers' 'expert' knowledge be valued over and above that of other actors?

It is important to acknowledge, however, that social phenomena, particularly social policies, are continually produced, reproduced and changed through the intentional and unintentional action of actors and do not, therefore, have the durability of objects in the natural world. Thus, my description and explanation of the emergence of the FSS is not one that will remain adequate across time, but can offer an explanation of the project as it emerged and was consolidated in the first few years it was in operation. My thesis is, therefore, a social scientific truth-claim but one that is fallible and open to public scrutiny, criticism or corroboration.



A sceptical reader may question how the thesis would have been different had another philosophical approach been adopted. In some respects the differences would have been subtle. The same, or similar, research questions influenced by the substantive and theoretical literature might have been posed outwith the influence of critical realism. Furthermore, other positions from within an 'interpretive' paradigm would also be concerned with 'subjective meaning' (as this thesis has) giving rise to a similar kind of analysis i.e. one concerned with understanding the meaning social phenomena have for individuals (Scott, 2005). However, although qualitative researchers may use similar techniques of data collection and similarly take as their starting point experiences and the subjective content of social action from the perspective of research participants, they conceive of the information obtained in different ways. Rather than understanding interview data as individual 'perceptions', critical realism sees meanings as social constructions and, in turn, relates these to underlying social structures (e.g. the FSS) within which social actors are embedded and which enable or constrain actions. With a critical realist philosophical underpinning, analysis of interview data requires not just the interpretation of meaning or discourse but attempts to gain a deeper understanding grounded in causal explanation. Indeed, the thesis assumes the FSS and its effects are real. The distinction between a critical realist study and 'weak' or 'soft' versions of social constructionism would be minimal, therefore, as the latter often contains an implicit realist ontology (Sayer, 1997; Wei-Chung Yeung, 1997; Matthews, 2009).

## **The evidence: Is intensive family support 'good' or 'bad'?**

The evidence presented in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight of the thesis reported on the analysis of the empirical material. The latter was intended to provide not just a description of the FSS but an explanatory analysis that discloses the real necessary and contingent conditions that brought the FSS into being and that made the services, and its particular way of working possible. The necessary causal factors identified in Chapter Six included the construction of a "convincing narrative"; the support of a coalition of actors to advance this problematisation; and the establishment of institutional practices including partnership working arrangements. The FSS's ultimate terms of reference and internal structure were, however, contingently forged within the space of local power struggles aimed at making the project strategically necessary. This meant that in a bid to render the project politically viable a discourse of 'need' was effectively colonised by one of behaviour control, and what might have been more straightforwardly a social policy was suffused with an agenda directed at addressing concerns about the containment of disorder, in part, through the utilisation of enforcement based technologies of control. The project's particular way of working was also dependent on the professional habitus and the everyday working practices of the project staff implementing the service with families. As was described in Chapter Seven, on the one hand, staff embraced an approach described as 'challenging' and as a 'twin track' philosophy of support backed up by enforcement, yet, in practice, they were sensitive to the fact that they were providing 'support' to women in the private spaces of their own homes and were reluctant to be dictatorial. This was also related to findings which indicated that the way in which project staff and other

agencies perceived and understood the 'problem' of ASB, together with the families referred to the project, informed how they responded. This was an approach which, in part, resisted dominant narratives about the perpetrators of ASB and defined the families as vulnerable and in need of a range of health and welfare interventions, rather than just control or punishment.

In thinking about the implications of the project for families on the receiving end, the thesis claims that there are both positive consequences as well as negative costs for the families involved. Echoing the concerns of academics critical of family support, the findings suggest that there are things about intensive family support that we do need to be wary of. Chapter Six demonstrated, for instance, how the FSS had to engage with a certain public protection narrative to ensure its legitimacy. Resonating with claims about the criminalisation of social policy and arising from the somewhat contractual nature of the service, the FSS embraced a quasi-penal identity that justified the intervention in broadly utilitarian terms of protecting communities of actual and potential victims of ASB. This gave way to the legitimate use of punitive technologies: the FSS has the power to make families living in the dispersed and core tenancies homeless and, through their close working relations with partner agencies such as the ALMO, YOT, police and the LA, also has the capacity to influence/support the imposition of non-housing legal sanctions such as ASBOs. Furthermore, the project encompasses additional coercive powers experienced, in particular, by those families living in the core residential accommodation whose liberty is subject to extreme restrictions and who are subject to what Garrett (2007) refers to as "infantilising" levels of control.



Beyond the unambiguously punitive, an examination of the project's ideological and practical content also reveals that, to a significant degree, the project is framed in ways that are very much about self-regulation and remoralisation (Gillies, 2005a), reflecting the Government's discourse on ASB as well as a broader 'politics of conduct' identified in the governmentality literature. The tendency to lay the blame for ASB with poor parenting, usually of mothers, is particularly acute. As such, the FSS is explicitly concerned with changing the (problematic) behaviour of family members and helping them develop 'better' and 'more appropriate' ways of managing their home, conducting themselves, and maintaining family and extra-familial relationships. These elements of the project are sometimes experienced, at best, as unnecessary and a source of irritation, or, at worst, as disciplinary and punitive, particularly when directed at mothers who often have little control over the behaviour of their teenage sons but who are expected to take responsibility for them. Related to this, it was also evident that the technology of the contract (Crawford, 2003., 2006) assumes a rationality and agency for controlling future events that some individuals do not possess. What is more, it appeared that the formal Support Plan does not always represent an agreement voluntarily entered into through a process of negotiation but is sometimes (for instance in Fran's case) imposed on individuals in a less than reciprocal manner.

These elements of the service raise important questions about the potentially harmful consequences of unrequested intervention for already vulnerable families whose actions are often not unlawful (Rodger, 2008). The evidence presented in this thesis suggests that for intensive family support to have positive benefits it needs to be decoupled from punitive and demonising



discourses and practices. Indeed, a fundamental contradiction was identified between the role of the project workers as 'help-givers' and housing officers responsible for enforcing compliance with tenancy agreements and other legal tools such as ASBOs. Whilst not wanting to deny that aspects of family members' behaviour may well be harmful and that sanctions, in some cases, may be warranted, contrary to the Government's claims, 'support' backed up by 'enforcement' did not seem conducive to positive change. Furthermore, the Government's assumptions about the utility of employing a contractual tool as a key part of an intensive family support intervention, seem to not only be flawed but sometimes unjust, particularly when transgressing the terms of the plan results in the imposition of serious sanctions (e.g. eviction).

While it can not be denied that the FSS does entail an intense surveillance and supervision of vulnerable and marginalised populations in domestic private spaces, the project also contains a significant social welfare ethos based on finding long term sustainable solutions to families' problems, not least security of housing and income. This is, in part, due to local actors' definition of 'the problem'. The way in which most actors described the families and understood their behaviour did not directly mirror the dominant ASB policy discourse discussed in Chapter Two. Rather, they clearly related disruptive behaviour to a range of factors associated with families' personal histories and health and welfare concerns. This meant that the emphasis on individual responsibility did not occur at the expense of wider external social and contextual factors like poverty, health and education. Structural and other constraints on families were not ignored and project workers helped some family's access available services to meet their needs.

The insights from the research also raise questions about the extent to which the micro-regulation of individuals is inherently problematic. While some women saw the involvement in their daily lives as an unwarranted interference, others welcomed the intervention of project workers and viewed themselves as in need of professional assistance and advice to acquire certain parenting capabilities and to effectively influence family behaviour and children's development. Indeed, the women interviewed who were receiving the service had commonly sought help with their children's increasingly problematic conduct in the past, help that had not been forthcoming. The women and project workers often agreed on the assessment of 'the problem' and 'the solution', therefore, such that the FSS did seem to provide families with the support and access to resources that they both needed and wanted. In some cases, this meant that the FSS did work to improve family members' quality of life. In most cases, the FSS project workers delivered the intervention in a way that did not feel to the women on the receiving end as stigmatising or akin to a form of surveillance and discipline whereby they are simply "told what to do" with little negotiation and meaningful communication. Furthermore, because the women were socially isolated and susceptible to depression, they generally valued the emotional support and the 'befriending' role provided by project staff. The lack of moral judgements, in particular, made by project staff was something that women valued. This draws attention to the power of the agency of those working to deliver ASB solutions (Stenson, 2005; Hughes, 2007; Prior, 2007). It would be erroneous to suggest, therefore, that the FSS is simply and straightforwardly representative of an authoritarian, punitive and disciplinary mechanism since the process bears similarities to welfare-based interventions

shaped not by crime control rationalities but by strategies, values and expertise often found in the domains of social policy. This echoes Prior's (2007) claims that complex relationships exist between the domains of 'crime policy' and 'social policy' such that as well as social policy becoming criminalised, there is also evidence of crime policy becoming 'socialised' as crime control problems are addressed through strategies and technologies more associated with social policy.

### **What are the implications for theory?**

As well as challenging the substantive critical literature on family support, the thesis demonstrates the strengths but also the marked limitations of both governmentality and political economy approaches in explaining the different origins of local responses to ASB and the way in which they have generated different understandings of politics and power.

The work inspired by governmentality approaches has been enormously important in this thesis. It has encouraged careful attention to what is said and how it is said, to the 'construction' of the 'problem' that intensive family support seeks to address and the associated policy solutions and technologies of governance that arise from this. The thesis has demonstrated, for instance, how the FSS is, in part, discursively premised upon an 'ethopolitics', a new politics of conduct concerned with ethical reformulation (Rose, 2000). This echoes the 'official' political rationality underpinning FIPs (Parr and Nixon, 2008), but also a wider set of ASB and family support governmental strategies primarily concerned with promoting self-regulation (Rose, 2000; Flint, 2002, 2004; Gillies, 2005a). The findings presented in Chapter Seven and discussed



above also demonstrate, however, how the dominant ASB narrative promulgated by the government and the popular media was, often explicitly, resisted by project staff and viewed as demonising and unproductive. This supports work that suggests governmentality approaches, often focused on the analyses of 'official' policy texts, can over-rationalise governance processes and grant regimes of authority a level of efficacy that may not reflect the complexities that characterise them (Flint, 2002).

While providing a useful conceptual apparatus, the governmentality approach did not offer a framework for analysing how non-discursive structural forms impinge upon and constrain people and their actions, nor did it allow for an acknowledgement of the key constitutive role of the state as a leading social force in the governance of the FSS (Sayer, 2002; Fitzpatrick, 2005). Chapter Six, for instance, has demonstrated that the emergence of the FSS was not entirely discursively constructed but was dependent on complex social networks and the strategic endeavours of state agents. Furthermore, Chapters Seven and Eight detailed how the way in which a policy 'problem' is conceptualised by those implementing policy does not lead straightforwardly to certain 'solutions', as is sometimes implied in governmentality literature. In the FSS, the professional identity and expertise of the staff was one factor that seemed to narrow the focus of the intervention to that which is within their expertise to address. Since most of the project staff were from a housing background, few had professional experience, qualifications or training in providing social care and support to families/individuals with high level needs. This appeared to limit what the project workers were able to offer families particularly in terms of the direct, one-to-one intervention provided. A core part of the latter was, therefore,



primarily restricted to parenting 'education', household management and the provision of emotional support. Thus, although dominant discourses might be resisted, whether and how this 'resistance' has any material effect on practice as 'technical means' is contingent.

Whereas governmentality theorists tend to give power relations primacy over that out of which they emerge (underlying structures and social relations), political economy literature explicitly engages with questions regarding who and what is the subject of regulation and for what purposes and aims. In this thesis, the approach worked to centre analytical attention on questions of underlying social structures and the primary importance of the state and economic relations. The empirical data did, indeed, demand recognition of the central role of the state, as political economy approaches would suggest, since there existed no real shift of responsibility from state to other (non-state) agents of government, and the state played a key role in setting the policy agenda and ensuring that particular perspectives were promoted, and in governance arrangements. However, the FSS appeared to be somewhat distanced from the concerns of business and the interests of capital - there was no explicit necessity to inculcate a work ethic. Rather than encouraging families to seek work and reinsert them into the lower reaches of the labour market in order to re-establish the conditions for sustained capitalist accumulation, a greater emphasis was placed on ensuring that families were paying off any debts they may have and were receiving the benefits and financial grants to which they were entitled. The FSS can not, therefore, be conceptualised straightforwardly as part of a 'social investment state' (Featherstone, 2006; Lister, 2006) or a

wider social ordering strategy which is legitimated by the moral and intellectual project of economic regeneration (Coleman 2002).

Political economy approaches also draw attention to the distinctly punitive and stigmatising elements of ASB and family support policies (Goldson and Jamieson, 2002; Coleman, 2004; Garrett, 2007). The research revealed that the FSS core unit, in particular, did operate with an exclusionary logic which impacted on already marginalised individuals. Moreover, as discussed above, the project also contained additional coercive and controlling elements that were directed at vulnerable families. Yet, it seemed that the punitive element of the service was, to some extent, confined to rhetoric. According to the project workers, not only is recourse to the use or threat of legal sanction not common, they also reflected on their self-imposed limits regarding the extent to which they seek to exercise discipline within the private spaces of families receiving the service. Partner agents also utilised the FSS as an alternative to enforcement technologies and legal sanctions (for example ASBOs and eviction) deemed to be both disciplinary and ineffective.

These nuanced findings support claims that political economic accounts do downplay the importance of agency and choice and do not, therefore, provide an accurate and comprehensive framework for understanding family support. In isolation, the perspective works to frame intensive family support as a unitary state-centred activity and tends to underplay its contested, complex and socially-located nature. As Edwards and Hughes (2009b) argue, such an approach tends to channel the vision of the social researcher onto those practices that fit the problematisation: that control strategies are an exercise in

securing the conditions for capital accumulation. As such, it is important to acknowledge there are state-led campaigns for dealing with ASB that might not be explicitly linked to neoliberal spatial ordering practices and which, therefore, need to be theorised differently. Notwithstanding this, the thesis has demonstrated that both political economy and governmentality perspectives have their place and that neither should be dispensed with. Rather, sociological analysis of the governance of ASB needs to be adapted alongside empirical research that takes better account of the agency and choice of local actors, and the range of necessary and contingent determinants of ASB policy.

### **What are the implications for policy?**

The thesis has suggested that intensive family support is complex and that its outcomes are dependent on a wide range of factors. The search for necessity and contingency means that the specific findings about the FSS (a particular, contingent case) can not be extrapolated (or generalised) to other intensive family support projects when, in fact, it may be unrepresentative - a uniqueness of geographical and historical experience is expected (Sayer, 1992). However, although concrete outcomes are conditioned by geographical and historical context, there are necessary relations that are indifferent to context (together with abstract knowledge of these) that make comparison meaningful, such that the FSS is not entirely 'unique' and generalisations of 'a kind' are possible (Sayer, 1992; Danermark, 1997; Hughes, 2007). What is generalisable is not only the way in which intensive family support policies emerge out of the enrolment of support and coalitions around particular problematisations but also about what makes a punitive and non-punitive type of intervention, and, therefore, how positive, progressive change for vulnerable families accused of



ASB might be generated through intensive family support. This suggests that certain practices are *necessary* for and can therefore remain beneficial agents of change in different historical and cultural contexts. What can be gleaned from such a critical realist approach is how effective practices might be transferred across contexts. This does not underestimate the importance of the context in influencing practice but suggests that there might be requisite practices across different situations (this thesis has highlighted the need to decouple support and enforcement; the importance of a non-stigmatising and befriending approach; and the benefits of focusing attention not only on the personal and familial but wider structural factors as well). Such a position also requires social researchers to move beyond the limitations of much of the critical, scholarly literature to ask questions about 'what is to be done', politically, practically and normatively (Hughes, 2009).

While this research has pointed to some of the practice principles, process and interventions that promote more or less positive and progressive experiences and outcomes for families, further research is required to identify where the boundaries of intensive family support lie and which families, and with what types of 'need profile', are likely to benefit most. Research to better understand how intensive family support projects vary, by locating them within different and changing forms of local governance arrangements, would also be beneficial. Indeed, established within different geo-historical contexts, with the support of an alternative set of professional actors and partner agencies, intensive family support is likely to generate different kinds of projects with different permutations of disciplinary, welfare and punitive discourses and practices. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to monitor closely the changes that occur



as intensive family support becomes ever more central to the Government's ASB strategy and as a result perhaps more tightly controlled and regulated, and the extent to which room for political agency at a local level may shrink as a result.

### **A final thought**

The thesis paints an ambivalent picture of intensive family support; the role intensive family support plays in the governance of ASB is inherently bound up with the way in which it is implemented at the local level and the particular circumstances of the families involved. As such, intensive family support is perhaps best conceptualised as being "more than one thing at once" which encourages us to think beyond the "oppressive requirement" (Clarke, 2004a: 2) to make binary choices: family support as 'good' or 'bad'. Thus, while it is easy to be swept up in the righteous condemnation of intensive family support for families accused of ASB, this thesis challenges the many critics of family support on the grounds that their claims are not only overly simplistic and somewhat erroneous but also politically foreclosed (Hughes, 2007). Indeed, despite an acknowledgment that ASB itself is not simply a political or media fabrication, they tend to offer no argument regarding what would be a desirable and feasible alternative to both behaviour identified as harmful and the equally 'real' needs of families (Matthew, 2009). While it is hard to argue that there are not worrying aspects to intensive family support that give way to the containment and control of 'problem families', it is hoped that a positive vision threads through the thesis: intensive family support can be conducive to helping disadvantaged and troubled families access better lives.

To conclude, this thesis could not have been written without the generosity of all the people who took part, but it is to Fran, Louise, Helen, Charlotte and Cathy who shared their private, sometimes tragic, stories with me that I am most indebted. While I would not suggest that the research has empowered them in anyway - I do not believe it has improved their lives - I hope that this thesis can go some way to helping women like them: there is a moral imperative to help families in trouble access public provision and receive adequate social, emotional and financial support.

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## Appendices

### Appendix One: Fieldwork timetable

Table 1: fieldwork timetable

Timeline	Details of interviews carried out
<p><b>Phase 1: summer 2004</b></p> <p><i>Interviews with families and referrers.</i></p>	<p>Interviews with families focused on their perceptions about why they had been referred to the services, an exploration of the perceived underlying causes of the 'problem' behaviour, their views about being referred to a project, their relationships with project workers, their experiences and perceptions of the FSS, their understandings of the term 'anti-social behaviour' and the effects of being labelled as such.</p> <p>The interviews with referrers explored the nature of the individual's relationship with the family they referred, previous interventions employed by the referral agency, their rationale for referring the family to a project, their views on what role they felt the project could play in addressing these issues. Perceptions on the nature of the problem, the process by which families are labelled anti-social and their understanding of the causes of the behaviour were also explored.</p>
<p><b>Phase 2 spring 2005</b></p> <p><i>Interviews with project staff.</i></p>	<p>Project workers were interviewed to collect information on the project development process, forms of intervention used and the approach adopted, staff skills and experience, partnership working, perceptions on the nature of the problem, the process by which families are labelled anti-social and their understandings of the causes of the behaviour</p>



	and ASB more widely.
<b>Phase 3 Summer 2005</b>  <i>Round two interviews with families.</i>	<p>Approximately 12 months after the initial interview with family members, a series of follow up interviews were carried out with the families (where they could be contacted) to explore experiences, relationships and perspectives on the impact of the project.</p>
<b>Phase 4 summer/autumn 2005</b>  <i>Interviews with partner agencies operating at a strategic level</i>	<p>Interviews with senior officers from partner agencies explored the rationale behind the establishment of the project, experiences, relationships and perspectives on the impact of the project, the project's position within the local policy and practice context, as well as the process by which families are labelled anti-social and their understanding of the causes of the that behaviour.</p>
<b>Phase 5: Spring/summer 2006</b>  <i>Third round interviews with families.</i>	<p>A third set of interviews were carried out with families (where it was possible to make contact with them) to explore what had happened since their last interview and the project's perceived role in any change.</p>
<b>Phase 6: Summer/Autumn 2006</b> <b>Interviews with referral</b>  <i>Agencies/representatives from agencies working closely with the families.</i>	<p>A series of further interviews were conducted with representatives from agencies working directly with the families (sometimes this was the same person who referred them). Where no agencies were involved, the families' project worker was interviewed. These interviews explored experiences, relationships and perspectives on the impact of the project intervention on the family they had contact with. These interviews also explored the impact of family project interventions on their work/organisation.</p>



<p><b>Phase 7: winter 2006/2007</b></p> <p><i>Interviews with local residents</i></p>	<p>Interviews with residents living in the locality as well as the local councillor in which the core residential accommodation is located were undertaken to explore perceptions and understandings about the impact of the FSS on the local neighbourhood.</p>
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Table 2: When fieldwork took place in the case study site

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5	Phase 6	Phase 7
	Jul-Sep 04	May 05	Jul 05	Sep 05	Apr 06	Sep-Oct 06	Jan 07
Family 1							
Family 2							
Family 3					Withdrew		
Family 4							
Family 5			Withdrew		Withdrew		
Family 6 <sup>20</sup>							
Referrer family 1: HAS team officer						N/A <sup>21</sup>	
Referral family 2: Homelessness officer						N/A	
Referral family 3: ASB officer#1						N/A	
Referrer family 4: ASB officer#2							
Referrer 5	Declined						
Project manager#1							
Project manager#2							
Project Worker#1							
Project Worker#2							
Project worker#3							
LA lead officer							
Social services manager							
ASB Team Manager							
ASB Officer3-family4							
YOT officer – family3							
Local Resident 1							
Local Resident 1							
Local Resident 1							
Local councillor							
<b>Total interviews (35)</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5<sup>22</sup></b>	<b>6</b>

<sup>20</sup> Invited to take part in the research in place of family 5 who moved out of the area and could not be contacted.

<sup>21</sup> no ongoing involvement with the family

<sup>22</sup> Two ASB officers involved with family 4 interviewed together.



## **Appendix Two: The interview topic guides**

### **1. Interview no. 1 with women referred**

#### **Family details**

- Can you tell me about your family? Who lives with you?

(Probes: age and gender of family members, and details of other significant relationships)

#### **Housing history**

- Were you living at this address when you were referred to the FSS (check who owns)?

(Probes: Have always lived in this area? how long lived in the area? what like/don't like the area? Do you plan to stay in current accommodation or looking to move? Previous homes - types of tenancy, how long lived in different accommodation, reason for moving voluntary or involuntary?)

#### **Details of referral to FSS**

- Could you tell me how you and your family came to be referred to the project?  
(alleged anti-social behaviour by family members)
- How did you feel about being referred? Did you have any concerns/fears?

- What do you think would have happened to you if you hadn't agreed to the referral?
- How much choice do you think you had over accepting the referral?
- Had your landlord offered any support to you prior to the referral?
- What other support/advice did you have access to?

### **Understanding of ASB**

- What is your understanding of the term ASB?
- What sort of things do you think are anti-social?
- Have these things ever happened to you? (When? Where? What?)
- What sort of behaviour by your family was said by others to be anti-social?  
(Who said this? When?)
- On scale of 0 (not at all) – 10 (very much) how much do you think you and your family have been like this?  
  
(Probe: if certain behaviour was identified as being asb ask when did this behaviour not happen? During the time that asb did not occur what was happening at these times to make things good?)
- How would you explain your family's/children's behaviour? What was the cause of the behaviour?
- How did it feel to be accused of anti-social behaviour?
- What is it like to be described as an anti-social family/having anti-social children?



### **Relationship with the FSS and the development of the support plan**

- Can you tell me about how the FSS works (probe: how often do you see the project worker?, what does s/he do for you/family members?)
- Has a support plan been drawn up (how?)
- Who was involved in deciding what support you wanted/needed?
- how well did people listen to your opinions when creating it? Can you give me an example?
- how helpful do you think your involvement with the project will be? 0 (not at all)-10 (very much)
- how confident are you that it will work?
- Are there things that you don't enjoy/find challenging about working with FSS? (probe: Could you have refused these elements - consequences?)
- Have there been interventions/types of support offered/provided that you don't think you need/don't want?
- Is there anything you feel you need but haven't been offered?
- If the project could be more helpful what could it do differently?
- How would you rate your relationship with your project worker on a scale of 1 – 10 (1 = awful 10 = brilliant)
- How would describe your relationship with the project worker? (e.g. one of trust, friendship etc)

### **Outcomes/changes since working with project**

- Has your life and that of your family changed in any since joining the project? If

yes, what three words would you use to describe how your life has changed since being in contact with the project?

- Have you benefited from your involvement in the project? If yes, what things has the project done to help you?
- From 0-10, where 0 is useless and 10 is couldn't be better, how would you rate the project?
- Since you were referred to the project have you been involved with any other agencies? If so which agency and what type of involvement/support?
- Is this project different from other agencies in your life
- How do you feel now about having been referred to the project? (probe: was it a good/bad thing? Did you feel that you needed the support of the project when you were first referred?)

## **Futures**

- What would you like to happen next?/What are your expectations of the families project?
- What if anything would you like to be different about your life in 6 months time?
- How do you think the project can help you to achieve this?
- What do other agencies need to do to help you achieve this?
- What do you think you and your family need to do to achieve this?

## **2. Topic guide: Interview no. 2 women referred**

### **Current situation**

(Summarise some of the main issues that were discussed in the previous interview e.g. reasons for the referral, threat to tenancy, how long had been with project)

- Are you/your family still being supported by the Project? [Check to see if this is the perception]
- If yes, has the amount of support you are receiving changed? How often are you now seeing your Project worker? Is contact your Project worker a regular thing or does it (partly) depend on your needs?
- What sorts of help are you now getting from your Project worker. How (if at all) has this changed since you started with the Project?
- What sorts of help are you now getting more and what sorts less than in the early phase?
- What has happened since we last talked?
- What, if anything has changed (for better/worse?)

(Probes: reflect on issues that emerged as significant in previous interview e.g. is the family still supported by the project or has the case closed? Has the tenancy stabilised? Have ASB complaints reduced/continued? Other significant issues e.g. schooling/children's behaviour, criminal civil charges or proceedings?)

- Has there been any change in who is living with you now (compared with the situation at the last interview) – has anyone moved in or out of the household?
- How are you, as a family getting on together? In what ways has that changed

### **Views on working with the project**

- How do you feel now about having been referred to FSS (reflect on what was said before re: feelings about being referred)? Was it a good/bad thing? Why?)
- Looking back to when you were first referred to FSS can you remember what you expected to be the outcome of working with the project? (Reflect back on what wanted from the project - What were the main issues for yourself/children that you felt needed to be addressed/dealt with?)
- Which of the issues you just mentioned do you think the FSS has tried to help you tackle? And which do you think have not been addressed (or not addressed effectively)?
- What has been best/worst thing about working with the FSS?
- Are there things that you haven't enjoyed/found challenging whilst working with FSS (Could you have refused these elements - consequences?)
- Have there been interventions/types of support offered/provided that you don't think you needed/didn't want?



- Has there been anything you felt you needed but weren't offered?
- Since you were referred to the project have any other agencies provided you with help? If so which agency and what type of help?
- (where applicable) Are you still in contact with agency/s since leaving the project?

### **Outcomes/changes since working with project**

- How/has your life and that of your family changed since joining the project?
- Have you benefited in any way from your involvement in the project?  
What things, if any, has the project done to help you?
- What do you think would have happened to you if you hadn't agreed to the referral?
- From 0-10, where 0 is useless and 10 is couldn't be better, how would you rate the project?
- How would you rate your relationship with your project worker on a scale of 1 – 10 (1 = awful 10 = brilliant)
- How have your feelings about the Project – and your Project worker – changed over the time you have been working / worked together?

### **Future**

1. What would you like to happen next?/ What are your expectations of the FSS?

2. How do you see the next six months? (where appropriate) Has the situation stabilised in the long/short term/Will things stay the same/improve?

### **Closing the case**

- When you were first referred to [name of project], how long did you expect to work with the project? At what point did you think the support would end?
- (If case closed) How was it decided that it was the right time for the project to withdraw their support?
- (If case closed) Do you think your case was closed at the right time?/How did you feel about your case being closed?
- Have you had any contact with the project since your case was closed? How much? On whose terms?
- (If case open) When do you think it will be the right time for your case to be closed?
- How ready do you feel to finish your contact with the Project?
- Are you looking forward to finishing your contact with the Project? When do you think this will happen?
- How confident are you that things will go well after you stop receiving help from the Project?
- What, if anything, worries you about finishing your contact with the Project?

### **3. Topic Guide: Project Manager**

#### **Prior experience/professional background**

- How long project manager for FSS?
- Ask for details of previous work experience/professional background
- Why did you decide to work with the project and how would you describe your role as project manager?
- How much is your approach to managing the x project informed by your previous work experience/professional background? (probe: examples of ways in which professional background informs current work)

#### **Training and skills development**

- What skills would you say are essential for some one managing a project such as this?
- Since you became the project manager what training have you been given? Who provided? How useful?
- What further training and development of skills/ competencies would you like?

#### **Staffing**

- How many staff does the project have and with what range of experience?
- How are staffing levels and specifications decided and by whom?
- Would you say any particular occupational culture shapes the work here?

- Do you have/ have you had any staffing problems? (Probe on recruitment, hours and duties, work load, skills and experience, supervision needs, professional background, stress)

### **Management and Governance**

- Is there a project Steering Group? (Probe for members, role, problems)
- Do you have an annual budget to meet? (Probe on how costs and funding are determined, what overheads are payable etc).

### **Perception of nature and purpose of the project**

- Now that the project has been running for some time, how would you describe what the project does? (Probe: Identification of the project boundaries i.e. main purpose, who for, what provide, length of contact, what partner agencies work with)
- Do you think this is understood by the agencies you work with/ by service users/by staff?
- What do other agencies think is the role of the project? What do they expect from you/ from the project?
- Who would you say are the main stakeholders in the FSS?
- Which agencies have the most influence on the work of FSS?
- How would you describe your relationship with these agencies? Are some more engaged than others?
- Do you think it is important who provides the service i.e. an independent of statutory body, advantages and disadvantages of different service providers



### **Perceptions of asb and labelling of service users**

- What do you understand is meant by the term anti-social behaviour – do you think it is useful term?
- Would you describe families referred to the project as anti-social? In what way? (probe for working definitions and language used to describe the families that are supported by the project)
- What are the reported behaviours that have caused families to be at risk of eviction? Main reasons why adults/children referred to the project. (Probe: are families are also victim of anti-social behaviour from others)

### **Perceptions of the referral processes/admission criteria/ politics of entry**

- Which agencies refer to the project and why
- Can give examples of specific issues affecting the ability of a family to sustain their accommodation (what are the main/common issues for adults for children)
- When do you tend to become involved with a family? (probe: re timing – too early/ late?)
- The majority of families referred to the project are white British, why do you think this is the case?
- Process of assessing referrals - how are decisions made about who to accept and who to refused and by whom? (Probe for filtering processes that may be used e.g. use of a referral panel – who are the members?)

- Do service users have a choice to engage with project, how restricted is the choice? What does a willing/co-operative person/family look like?

### **Delivery of the service and approaches to interventions**

- How many core and outreach clients do you have?
- What differences are there in providing core and outreach services?
- Typically what do project workers do?
- What forms of support/intervention does the Project typically provide (i.e. commonly included in support plans) – please list
- To what extent has work on 'parenting skills' dominated support plans?
- Can you describe a good piece of work the project undertook with a family that had positive outcomes? (Seek detail; what was done where, when, how and with who)
- How was it decided to work in this way? (Prior assessment; their assessment; their preferred way of working; experience)
- What was useful about working in this way? What worked? How do you know it worked (evaluation)?
- What theoretical approaches or models were used? (e.g. types of parenting models; If applicable, how did the project learn about these approaches? E.g. training; previous experience; education; reading etc.)
- What other ways of working exist within the project?
- Do you have an example that did not work as well? Probe for explanation
- Impact of project interventions on other service providers – When families are referred to FSS do agencies tend to continue their contact or withdraw?

## **Outcomes**

- **What criteria do you use to decide to end contact with a family?**
- **How would you judge whether you are doing a good job? (Probe: Is there any systematic evaluation? Use of the terms engagement and disengagement what do they mean?)**
- **How do others judge your performance/ the performance of the project?**
- **Ideal length of contact with service users**
- **What are your biggest difficulties? How are they addressed/ managed?**
- **What do you think the project has achieved so far?**

#### **4. PROJECT WORKERS TOPIC GUIDE**

##### **Prior experience/professional background**

- How long working for project x?
- Ask for details of previous work experience/professional background

Probe for: Knowledge/experience of working with families/adults/children and homeless/vulnerable people; Knowledge /experience of health/education/special needs/behavioural problems; prior use of narrative/solution focussed practices; Local networking skills / knowledge of local agencies; Management experience; Interpersonal skills, counselling, support, instilling confidence)

- Why decided to work with the project and how would you describe your role?
- How much is your approach to the work informed by your previous work experience/professional background? (Ask for examples of ways in which professional background informs current work)

##### **Training and skills development**

- What would you say are the key skills needed to work here?
- Since you started working for FSS what training have you been given? Who provided? How useful?
- What further training and development of skills/ competencies would you like?



### **Perception of nature and purpose of the project**

- How would you describe what the project does? (Probe Identification of the project boundaries i.e. main purpose, who for, what provide, length of contact, what partner agencies work with)
- What do other agencies think is the role of the FSS?
- What do they expect from you/ from the project?
- Which agencies have the most influence on your work with families?
- How would you describe your relationship with these agencies? Are some more engaged than others?
- Do you think it is important who provides the service -i.e. an independent of statutory body, advantages and disadvantages of different service providers

### **Perceptions of asb and labelling of service users**

- What do you understand is meant by the term anti-social behaviour – do you think it is useful label
- By whom and how have service users come to be defined as anti-social
- How would you describe families referred to the project (probe for working definitions and language used to describe the families that are supported by the project)
- What are the reported behaviours that have caused families to be at risk of eviction?/Main reasons why adults/children referred to the project (Probe for whether families are also victim of anti-social behaviour from others)

- Do you have any views on what the underlying causes of the problems may be?
- Do you feel that families referred to the project are perceived in the same way by the referral agencies? Is there a common understanding of what the "issues" are?

### **Perceptions of the referral processes/admission criteria/ politics of entry**

- Which agencies refer to the project and why
- Can give examples of specific issues affecting the ability of a family to sustain their accommodation (what are the main/common issues for adults for children)
- Typically what action is taken to address the problems prior to referral (probe for prior interventions whether warning letters will have been sent, NSOPs, other forms of legal actions)
- Process of assessing referrals - how are decisions made about who to accept and who to refused
- Do service users have a choice to engage with project, how restricted is the choice? What does a willing/co-operative person/family look like?

### **Assessments and development of the support plan/agreed outcomes**

- Outline how assessments are made and the process by which issues to be addressed are identified in relation to adults and children family members
- Outline how desired outcomes are identified

## **Delivery of the service and approaches to interventions**

- Typically what do project workers do?
- What forms of support/intervention does the Project typically provide (i.e. commonly included in support plans) – please list
- Can you describe a good piece of work you undertook with a family that had positive outcomes? (Seek detail; what was done where, when, how and with who)
- How was it decided to work in this way? (Prior assessment; their assessment; their preferred way of working; experience; directed/encouraged by supervisor/project)
- What was useful about working in this way? What worked? How do you know it worked (evaluation)?
- What theoretical approaches or models were used?
- If applicable, how did the project learn about these approaches? (training; previous experience; education; reading etc.
- What other ways of working do you think could be effective? What other ways of working exist within the project?
- Was there anything that did not work as well
- Impact of project interventions on other service providers – When families are referred to FSS what impact does it have on other agencies working with the family (probe for whether agencies withdraw or reduce their contact)

## **Outcomes**

- How would you judge whether you are doing a good job? (Probe: Is there any systematic evaluation?)
- How would others judge?
- Ideal length of contact with service users? (Probe: what determines when you stop working with a family?)
- In your experience, what barriers are there to doing good work?
- What do you think the project has achieved so far?



## **5. Topic guide: referral agency**

### **Details of the Referral agency**

- How long worked for X agency
- What is your position (probe for details of responsibilities and role)
- Could you give me a little information about your background, how long in current post, previous experience etc

### **Why referred to the project**

- Can you tell me why you decided to refer Family X to the project?

(probe for details of the reported behaviours that have caused the family to be at risk of eviction?

- alleged anti-social behaviour by family members
  - victim of anti-social behaviour from others
  - other factors)
- How long have these problems been going on?
  - Can you give me details of some specific incidents/complaints?
  - Which members of the family were allegations of ASB directed at and by whom? (probe for who the main complainants were)
  - Overall on scale of 0 (not at all) – 10 (very much) how anti-social do you think the family's behaviour was/is?

- What exactly was the threat Family X's home e.g. NOSP served, injunctions.

### **Information on criminal/civil charges**

- Have any members of the family got any criminal convictions?
- Is there any history of alleged criminal activity where charges haven't been brought?
- Do you know of any civil charges that have been brought against any members of the family?

### **The referral process**

- Prior to the referral, what action had you taken to resolve the problem?
- What action had been taken by other agencies to resolve the problem
- How did you refer the family to the project – get details of the referral process, how did it happen, joint needs assessments etc
- At what point did the family know that they have been referred? (Probe: pre or post any notices ABCs, ASBOs etc)
- What was your relationship with Family X like at the point at which you referred them to the project? (Probe: How did the family feel about the referral?)
- Were Family X is willing to engage with the project?
- On a scale of 0-10 (0 none at all, 10 completely) how much choice did the family have over the referral?

- What would have happened had they not engaged?

### **Perceptions of family/ASB**

- When did you first hear the term asb?
- In general what sort of behaviour would you describe as being anti-social?
- Do you think ASB is a useful term?
- What labels would you use to describe Family X? Would you use the label 'anti-social' to describe Family X?
- What are the main issues for the adults/children that you feel need to be addressed?
- How would you explain the families behaviour?/do you have any view on what the 'root causes' of the problems might be?
- To your knowledge, has Family X ever been the victim of ASB? details?

### **Expectations about the project**

- Since you referred Family X to FSS, have you been involved in the family's assessment? How?
- To your knowledge have other agencies involved in the assessment process? (Probe for which agencies)
- Do you feel family X and the problems they face are perceived in the same way by the different agencies involved with the family?/ Is there a common understanding of what 'the issue' is?

- Have you had an input in deciding what issues are to be addressed in relation to the adults and children within the family or is this all negotiated between FSS and the family?
- Do you know what kind of interventions will be offered to family X?
- Do you think these the right ones?
- How do you think the family will benefit from involvement in the project?
- On a scale of 0-10 how helpful do you think the support offered by the project will be? 0 (not at all)-10 (very much)
- What will be your role in the project throughout Family X's engagement?
- What do you hope will be different after the family have worked with the project? (Probe: What in your view would be a successful outcome for family X when their involvement with the project has come to an end?)
- Do you think that the support that will be provided to family X will reduce the risk of eviction in the short term or long term?
- In what ways, if any, has the project affected your day to day job ( probe: made it easier, more difficult or stayed the same)
- Do you feel that the project can successfully address the underlying problems that have led the family to be threatened with eviction?
- What do you feel the project can offer family X that other agencies can't?
- From 0-10, where 0 is useless and 10 is couldn't be better, how would you rate the project?
- Since you referred X family to the project do you know if any other agencies have provided them with support? If so which agency and what type of support?



**6. Topic guide – referrer interview no. 2/agency involved with family**

**The individual family - general update**

**(Where applicable)**

- **Can you tell me what your job title is and describe your role and responsibilities?**
- **When did you first come into contact with Family X and why? How would you have described that family when you first met them?**
- **Are you still in contact with any member of the x family and if so in what context? (If contact has ceased ask for details of the last time they were in touch)?**
- **Can you tell me what do you know about the current composition of the family? (If known ask for details of age and gender of all people living in the family unit)**
- **Do you know if the composition of the family unit stayed the same since they started working with the project?**
- **The last known address we have for X family is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. Is this the address you have for this family, if not can you provide details of the last known address the family lived at?**
- **Since referral to the project has family X remained in the same home? (If yes, can you comment on the reasons for that move and the impact it has had on the family and the wider community?)**

## **The impact of the project on family/community**

- Are you aware of the specific interventions/work that the FSS did with the family?
- If yes, can you describe that work, and your views of it/do you think these interventions were the right ones?
- Do you think the family benefited from the involvement of the FSS? In what way?
- Can you identify any changes - positive or negative - that have occurred during the time family X were supported by the project?
- Would you attribute any of these changes to the work of the project?
- When the family left the project/when you last had contact with the family, do you know if there were ongoing complaints about the families behaviour? (If there were any ongoing complaints ask for full details about the perpetrator and nature/frequency of the complaints)
- Do you think that the support that has been provided to family X has reduced the risk of eviction? If yes, in the short term, or long term?
- To your knowledge, does the families' behaviour impact in any way on the immediate neighbourhood in which the family live? Do they have good/bad neighbour relations?
- Do you feel that the project has/can successfully address the underlying problems that led the family to be threatened with eviction?
- What do you think the future might hold for Family X?

## **Impact of project on other agencies**

- **How would you describe your organisation's relationship with the FSS?**
- **The projects have now been operating for over 2 years, has the project and your organisation's relationship with it changed over that period?**
- **Do you make referrals to the projects? If yes, can you describe if that process has changed over time?**
- **Do you feel that the project can offer family X something that other agencies can't?**
- **Do you have any views on the core unit? Potential benefits/drawbacks?**
- **Does the work of the project impact on your workload in any way?**
- **Do you have any views on the costs of the project? Could you compare with the costs that might be incurred if families were not referred?**
- **Do you feel that the referral of a family results in costs savings for your organisation (probe for how these might arise, whether they can be quantified in any way)**
- **Do you think the FSS has a profile in X ? Could you comment on how local stakeholders and community based agencies view the project?**
- **Do you know if any other agencies have provided the family with support? If so which agency and what type of support?**
- **Could you give us details of any agencies you are aware of that are currently working with the family**

## **7. Topic Guide: Stakeholders**

### **Details of stakeholder**

- Can you tell me what is the remit of your team/organisation is? and what your role is within it?
- What role does your department play more broadly in tackling anti-social behaviour in X area? (Is it represented on any ASB strategic planning group?)
- Thinking back to when the FSS was first established, can you tell me if you had any involvement in the development of the project?
- Were you able to shape how the project was organised at that stage?
- What was the rationale for setting up the project? (probe: What was the need or problems that the project was designed to address? Was it about filling a service gap?)
- Did it fit with a larger city-wide ASB agenda?
- Thinking about the context of the project, is there anything that is particular to X that made this a place where an innovative project like this could happen/could gain political support?
- What on-going involvement does your department have with the project? (Probe for membership of steering group, assessment panel)

### **Perceptions of what the project does?**

- How would you describe what the project does? (Probe: identification of the project boundaries i.e. main purpose, who for, what provide, length of contact)
- Does 'rehabilitation' describe what the project does?



- What on-going involvement does your organisation have with the project?  
(Probe for membership of steering group, consultations)

### **Referral of families to the project**

- Does your organisation refer families to the project?
- If yes, how do you determine which families have most potential to benefit from the project? (probe for criteria for referrals, whether there are any types of families which cannot be referred)
- How are the possibility of referral and any criteria made known to appropriate members of staff in your organisation?
- Once a family has been referred, do you have any involvement with the decisions as to whether the referral should be accepted and in deciding the plan for the family?
- Do you have any procedures for monitoring a family's progress once they are placed with the project?
- If a family is not referred to the project, or not accepted by the project what are the alternatives that you would consider?
- Would you expect to have an on-going involvement with a family once a referral has been expected (probe for effect of referral on on-going enforcement action, other types of support)
- Majority of families referred to the project are white British, do you have any thoughts on why this is?

### **Perceptions of asb and labelling of families**

- What do you understand is meant by the term anti-social behaviour – do you think it is useful term?

- Would you describe families referred to the project as antisocial? In what way? (probe for working definitions and language used to describe the families that are supported by the project)
- What are the reported behaviours that have caused families to be at risk of eviction? Main reasons why adults/children referred to the project. (Probe for whether families are also victim of anti-social behaviour from others).

## Outcomes

- How would you judge whether the project is doing a good job? (Probe: Is there any systematic evaluation? What criteria has the stakeholder adopted?)
- What do you think the project has achieved so far?
- Do you have any views on the costs of the project? Could you compare with the costs that might be incurred if families were not referred?
- Do you feel that the referral of a family results in costs savings for your organisation (probe for how these might arise, whether they can be quantified in any way)

## **8. Resident interview**

### **About the neighbourhood – image reputation/desirability**

- How long have you lived in the area?
- How would you describe this neighbourhood? (probe: image reputation/desirability social relations; quality of the environment; level of service provision)
- How would you describe community relations in this neighbourhood ( probe: evidence of social cohesion/fragmentation, strong sense of belonging, good/poor social relationships etc)
- What are the big issues facing people in this neighbourhood?
- Has the neighbourhood changed in any ways over the last 3 years? Can any changes be attributed to the work of the FSS?
- To what extent is ASB a problem in this neighbourhood ( probe: descriptions of prevalent types and levels of ASB)
- Are there any particular areas of the neighbourhood where ASB occurs?

### **Impact of core unit on the neighbourhood**

- What did you know about the FSS when it first established in the area? (when/how did you find out about it)
- Prior to the FSS core unit being located in X neighbourhood did you have any concerns about the service and its possible impact on the neighbourhood?
- Has the location of the core unit impacted on the neighbourhood in any way (probe: positive and negative impacts and whether these have changed over

time, does the project have good/bad neighbour relations, impact on property prices, image of the area)

- Are you aware if any of the families working with the FSS have caused any difficulties in the neighbourhood? (probe: have there been any complaints about ASB or any other aspects of families' behaviour?)
- The project has now been operational in this area for some time how would you now describe relationships between the project and local agencies/residents? (probe: feelings about the project whether the project has a low or high profile within the neighbourhood, whether this has changed over time)
- Is the core located in the right place, if yes why?
- Would somewhere else have been more appropriate and if yes why?
- Do you have any views on the running/ design/layout, size of the core unit? (positive and negative)?

## **Conclusions**

- What advice would you give to other intensive family support projects looking to establish core residential accommodation? ( Lessons learnt)
- What advice, if any would you give to residents living in areas in which core accommodation is located?
- Are there any important issues which we have not covered in this interview?



### Appendix Three: Coding Framework

Orienting concepts	Core codes	Satellite codes
1. local politics/decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship with/influence of other agencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social services</li> <li>Housing</li> <li>Partnership working</li> <li>Professional <i>Habitus</i></li> <li>Filling a gap in service provision</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local political agendas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local ASB agenda</li> <li>Framing 'the problem'</li> <li>Building institutional support</li> </ul>
2. The role of the state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influence of national ASB policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homelessness agenda</li> <li>Respect agenda</li> <li>Trailblazer status</li> <li>Dominant ASB discourse</li> <li>Power relationship between</li> </ul>

		central and local state
	• Central state funding	• Funding constraints
3. The government al rationality	• Behaviour not families defined as 'anti-social'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departure from dominant ASB discourse</li> <li>• Awareness of negative labelling</li> </ul>
	• Multi-problem families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevalence of health and welfare issues</li> <li>• Structural and individual causes</li> <li>• Impact of life events</li> <li>• Poor parenting skills</li> </ul>
	• Need to address 'root causes'	• Cycles of Poor parenting
4. Techn ologies of intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Twin-track approach</li> <li>• Responsibilising</li> <li>• Challenging/not soft</li> <li>• Role of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Micro-management of family life</li> <li>• Parenting</li> </ul>



	<p>punishment/enforcement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benevolent alternative</li> <li>• Holistic approaches</li> </ul>	<p>training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaison with schools</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Access to benefits/resources</li> <li>• Confidence building</li> <li>• Remoralisation</li> </ul>
5. Expertise and agency	Skill base and expertise of project staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal use of (threats of) enforcement action</li> <li>• (Rhetorical) commitment to enforcement</li> </ul>
	Gap between rhetoric and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departure from dominant ASB discourse</li> <li>• Awareness of negative labelling</li> <li>• Respect of private space</li> </ul>
6. Impact on families	Positive reflections/change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Project workers as</li> </ul>

		friends
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access to services/benefits</li><li>Impact/outcome as contingent on familial context</li><li>• Confidence building/empowerment</li></ul>
	Punitive/stigmatising/disciplinary intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mixed feelings about core unit</li><li>• Visiting in pairs</li><li>• Public disciplining of children/performing</li></ul>